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BLACKFOOT ETHNOGRAPHY

by

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ALBERTA
MANUSCRIPT SERIES
NO. 8

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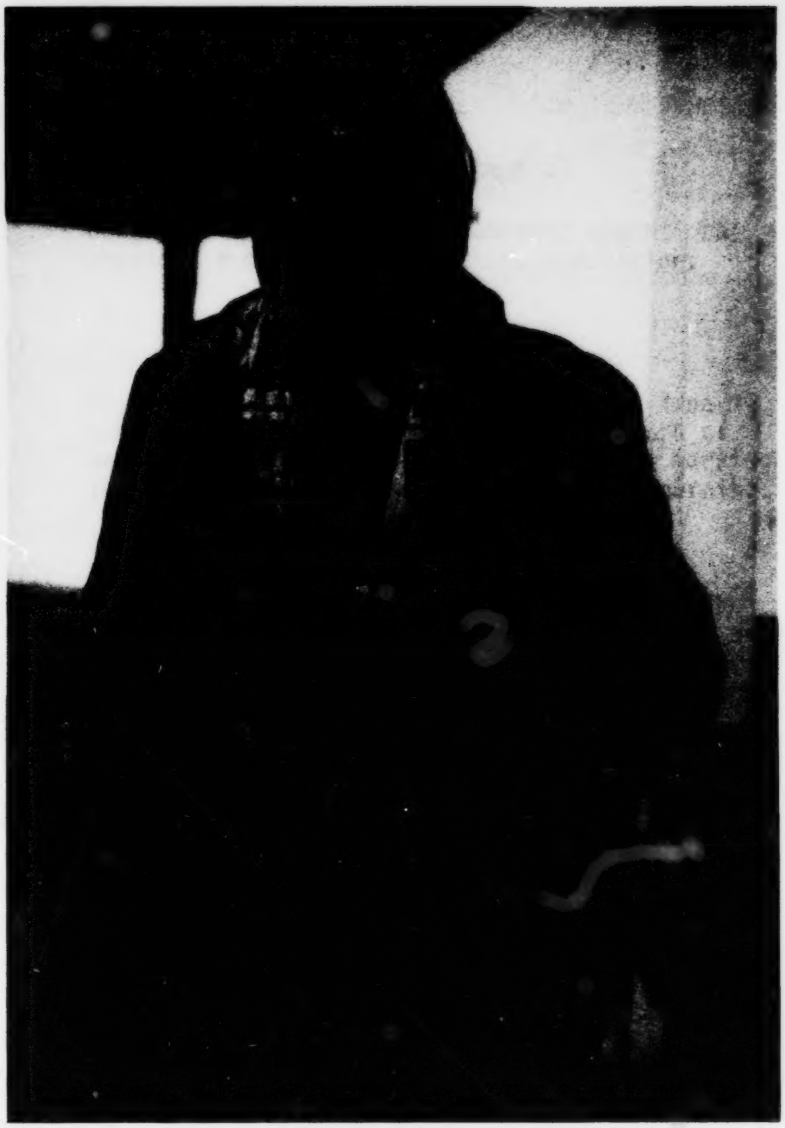
BLACKFOOT ETHNOGRAPHY

Being a Synthesis of the Data of Ethnological Science with the Information Concerning the Blackfoot Indians contained in the Writings of the Explorers, Travellers and Traders from the time of First Contact to the Year 1821.

By
Kenneth E. Kidd, B.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in the
University of Toronto

Toronto
1937



This work is dedicated to the memory of the late Crooked Meat Strings, the oldest and one of the most knowledgeable of my Blackfoot informants. He was also probably the last survivor of a bison hunt in Canada. (Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

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PREFACE

In the nearly fifty years since the field work for this thesis was done on the Canadian Blackfoot Reservation in southern Alberta, profound changes have taken place in that community. At that time, it was virtually a closed society, having little or no intercourse with the world beyond its borders. Many of the traditional values and customs of earlier times still prevailed. In the field of material things, the horse remained the single most important possession (as well as bringing social distinction), and transport was by wagon chiefly. Vestiges of the days when the young men hunted buffalo for food, clothing and shelter, as well as to gain social recognition, lingered on, for the "ration house" where white officials measured out the legal amounts of beef to each individual registered on the band records, as well as the benefactions of sugar and tea had totally supplanted the hunt. It was visited once or twice a week by each family, or at least by its representative, to receive these largesses. The old tipi of buffalo skin was almost universally replaced by tipis of canvas, but the idea remained the same. Most of these survivals were solely for ceremonial use, shelters now consisting of the miserable frame shacks which the Government provided -- insanitary hovels dotting the flat prairie landscape.

Many of the old people -- not necessarily known as "elders" -- still remembered the ancient ceremonies and rituals which had been handed down to them by their forebearers. The younger generation seemed disdainful of them, and even failed to learn the language, though it should be added that this attrition was due more to the desire of the Indian Affairs Branch to eradicate all recollection of the past. Likewise, it had suppressed that key ceremony of Blackfoot existence, the sundance, on the grounds that it was cruel and "uncivilized." If performed at all, it had to be performed in secrecy and surreptitiously. A few of the ancient societies lingered on, but having lost most of the reasons for existing at all, the paraphernalia was being discarded and their function disused.

According to most extant records the last buffalo hunt took place a little more than a century ago, about 1884. This was extremely fortunate for me, for there remained at least one old man who told me he had participated in such a hunt in his youth. This individual, Crooked Meat

Strings by name, was thought by his fellows to be upwards of 90 years old. His iron-grey hair, kept in two long braids, and his seamed face seemed to bear out this opinion; his hearing was not good, but his mind active. He knew no English, so conversation with him had of necessity to be carried on through an interpreter; admittedly a defective way of conducting a discussion. He was, however, keen to impart his recollections to me and he obviously took pride in being able to see it preserved for posterity.

Several other elderly people, both men and women, were likewise knowledgeable concerning their own history and traditions, and seemed pleased that a white man like myself should be at all interested in such things. Without their generous and kind co-operation, the field work could not have been carried out, and it is a pleasure to be able to acknowledge their help. None of them now will know this, for they no longer are numbered among the living, unfortunately.

To enable the reader to better to understand this thesis the following comments may be in order. In 1934, while engaged in teaching at an Indian residential school in Ontario, I enrolled for a Master's degree at the University of Toronto. It was deemed desirable, in view of the fact that the Department of Anthropology there was still small, and since I had taken much of my undergraduate work in history, that the Department of History should also be involved in supervising my work. Consequently my thesis committee included Prof. T.F. McIlwraith from Anthropology and several professors from the Department of History, including its chairman, Professor Chester Martin.

In view of these factors, it was agreed by the Committee that my thesis topic should be as stated in the Introduction. The scope was immense, as it proved, for it included all significant comments concerning the way of life of all the Plains Indian tribes; i.e., the Plains Ojibwa, the Plains Cree, the Assiniboine, the Gros Ventres, the Sarci and the three confederated tribes of the Blackfeet, the Blood and the Peigan. When these extracts had been collected and were presented to the Committee, they realized that the coverage was much too large for a Master's thesis and asked me to decide which single tribe I would prefer to concentrate upon. Although I had at that time no first-hand acquaintance with any of them, the Blackfeet appealed to me most and I chose them. Their accessibility from the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railroad, whose trains stopped regularly at the little village of Gleichen, within walking distance of the Blackfoot Reserve and the Reserve Office, and letters of introduction to Colonel Gooderham, the resident Indian Agent, were certainly deciding factors. I have never had occasion to regret my choice.

As stated, the thesis subject covered all the Indians who occupied the Canadian Plains (as that term is understood today) up to about 1821 (the time of union of the fur-trading companies). While the confederated tribes of the Blackfoot roamed as far north then as Edmonton and as far south as the Milk River, I limited my investigations to those resident in Canada at the time of my visit. Even at that, I was limited through financial and travel constraints to visiting the people on the Blackfoot Reserve, and was unable to question Bloods and Peigans (who resided on reserves some distance from the Blackfoot Reserve).

Up to the time of my research, very few anthropologists trained in modern techniques had ever visited any of the Canadian Blackfoot tribes. The best-known work on the Blackfoot (and it included those resident in Canada) was The Old North Trail (London, 1910), but McClintock, while a keen student, was not a trained anthropologist. Likewise, George Bird Grinnell was widely read, and so was J.W. Schultz (My Life as an Indian, Boston, 1923). There were several other writers of similar quality, good of their kind, but hardly scientific. For role models, one had to look farther afield, to studies of the Blackfeet resident in Montana, and here there was, even at that time, a wealth of studies, chiefly by Clark Wissler, but also by C.C. Uhlenbeck (An English-Blackfoot Vocabulary, Amsterdam, 1930). Most other sources available ca. 1935 consisted of the publications of missionaries and travellers of the 19th century, of whom John McLean, P.J. de Smet, E.F.S. Petitot and J.W. Tims are the most prominent. Having read the majority of the above authors before setting out for the field, I believe I was reasonably aware of what problems faced me, and had a fair understanding of Blackfoot culture.

Arriving in Gleichen in early July of 1935, I met the Indian Agent Gooderham who very kindly offered me accommodation in Old Sun School. This was a relatively new residential school; clean, well administered and comfortable. It was also well situated for my work, for it was near the Indian Office where I could meet many old people who came on business, and a sort of nerve centre for locating knowledgeable people and obtaining the vitally necessary transport to remoter parts of the Reserve. In short, I was well accommodated and settled.

I lost no time in getting on with my work, which consisted of questioning the elderly (they were not at that time referred to as "elders") on the points and on the statements made in my primary sources, noting down their replies, and trying to elicit ancillary comments. The collected material was, in due course, worked up into the present thesis, which was accepted as part of the requirements for the M.A. degree by the University of Toronto in 1937.

No changes have been made in the format, to preserve as much as possible the flavour of the original. To contemporary eyes, the bibliography may appear somewhat unusual in form, for at the request of the historians on the Committee, it was divided into primary sources for both history and anthropology and secondary sources for the same disciplines. Modern social sciences students will find this arrangement cumbersome, but for the above reasons it has been retained.

Kenneth Kidd
November 1985

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To Prof. T.F. McIlwraith I am indebted for invaluable assistance in every phase of my study of the Blackfoot Indians. An debt of equal magnitude is due to Prof. C. Martin for his guidance in historical matters. To Prof. R. Flenley I wish to acknowledge my deep gratitude for his unflagging interest, and for his inestimably valuable suggestions in matters of historiography and general content.

INTRODUCTION

The records left by the Europeans who penetrated into the Canadian prairies prior to the amalgamation of the fur-trading companies in 1821 contain numerous observations upon the Blackfoot Indians. Anthropological science has gleaned during the last fifty years a large mass of detailed information from the remnants of the tribes which still survive. In view of the fact that the primitive culture has been so terribly shattered by the impact of civilization, it should be evident that the notes of early travellers might reasonably be expected to supplement the recently acquired data; and conversely, the information so laboriously accumulated by scientific investigators in recent years might reasonably be drawn upon to supplement and explain the earlier records. It is the aim of this thesis thus to synthesize historical and anthropological data pertaining to the Blackfoot Indians, with certain limitations which had best be explained immediately.

All available historical material of a primary nature relating to the period beginning with the first penetration of Europeans into Blackfoot country and ending with the year 1821 has been used as a basis of this study. In other words, I have taken the historical notes in these writings which refer to the Blackfeet and incorporated them into an ethnographical outline of the tribal culture, embodying the results of modern anthropological investigations. It is true that this apparent disregard of time in using side by side notes made in different centuries is a violation of one of the canons of historical writing, but the aim is to present a picture of typical Blackfoot life as the first Europeans probably saw it rather than to trace the history of the people.(1)

Many phases of native life upon which the traders and explorers commented but little or not all have been omitted for that reason from this study. And many topics, though mentioned in the historical writings, have been dismissed rather summarily here because they have been so satisfactorily discussed elsewhere. The inevitable result is a certain lack of balance or proportion, for which I have tried to compensate by supplying references to the literature at suitable junctures. Unless the reader is aware of these unstressed features of Blackfoot life, he might easily conceive a distorted picture of it. On the other hand, topics not thoroughly discussed elsewhere have frequently been treated in some detail where circumstances seem to warrant such a procedure. The section on marriage is a case in point. I have even permitted myself to repeat quotations in different contexts in order to illustrate discrete topics.

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(1) Whether or not this thesis should be classified as historical or ethnographical I shall leave to others to determine. On this point the following articles might prove interesting:
Kroeber -- History and science in anthropology.
Boas -- History and science in anthropology: a reply.

It cannot be over-stressed that this study is but the vaguest outline of Blackfoot culture. Large volumes have already been written upon single topics scarcely mentioned in this conspectus of the entire culture. Consequently, there is hardly a statement which would not stand amplification; the treatment has sometimes been so condensed as to be almost cryptic.

The early writers were untrained and unsatisfactory observers of native life; anthropology is likewise deficient in that scientific knowledge of Blackfoot archaeology and linguistics is pitifully meagre. Until these deficiencies are supplied, it will be impossible to write a really satisfactory ethnography of this people, nor can the historical accounts always be intelligibly interpreted.

I have tried to make the treatment of the subject throughout as direct, simple and logical as possible. By describing first the country and then the life cycle from the cradle to the grave I hope to have preserved the interest naturally inherent in descriptions of alien peoples. The somewhat heterogeneous final chapter dealing with the social and political structure, war and religion seems to follow most naturally after the outline of the ordinary life of the people. I have, moreover, aimed at objectivity and avoided the drawing of conclusions. The important exceptions in the regard are to be found in the sections dealing with migrations and with religion, both of which are still speculative topics. I felt that the evidence with regard to migrations justified my differing from theories accepted in one school of anthropology. Occasionally, also, comparisons have been made between culture traits of the Blackfeet and neighbouring tribes; more frequently contrasts have been pointed out.

As originally planned, this study was to have included all the tribes inhabiting the Canadian prairies. To this end, extensive notes, both historical and anthropological, were made pertaining to the Plains Cree, the Plains Ojibwa, the Assiniboine, the Gros Ventre and the Sarsi Indians as well as to the Blackfeet. So voluminous were the notes thus acquired that some delimitation of the scope of the thesis became imperative. An opportunity to visit the Blackfoot reservation in southern Alberta decided the matter in favour of these people to the exclusion of all the rest. However, the knowledge gained by the study of the early history of the entire Plains and of the ethnography of the other tribes has proved indirectly of inestimable value as a general background.

The bibliography reflects the original scope of this study; all historical material relating to the early history of the Canadian prairies, used in connection with the first plan, has been included. It also contains references to general works on anthropology, and so far as possible to all literature relating to the Blackfoot Indians in particular even though a few of these were not available for study to me.

Blackfoot informants who supplied me personally with information have been referred to in the notes by letters of the alphabet.

CHAPTER I.

-- THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE --

The Blackfoot Indians have dwelt within historic times in that region which is now the southern portion of Alberta, and probably extended somewhat farther south into the present state of Montana. This is, of course, typical Plains country characterized by comparative levelness, extremes of climate, the almost exclusively graminacious nature of its flora, and the marked absence of trees.(1) It is the last of the three steppes before the Rocky Mountains are reached and is differentiated from the two easterly steppes by its more undulating nature and by the increasing aridity and consequently less abundant flora. The general elevation of the Blackfoot habitat is about two thousand feet above sea level. The drainage is principally into the Arctic Ocean and Hudson's Bay, with the Peace, and the North and South Saskatchewan the main waterways. The Milk River, however, drains into the Mississippi system; and westward, the Snake River leads down to the Columbia and the Pacific.

In the primeval state the wild life was incredibly abundant. On January 14, 1801, the younger Alexander Henry saw that the "ground was covered at every point of the compass, as far as the eye could reach, and every animal was in motion."(2) On February 1, he could count "from the top of my oak, from 20 to 30 herds of buffalo feeding in the Plains."(3) The herd was still slowly moving northward the next day. The bison were frequently trapped in crossing rivers and drowned; on April 1, the same author recorded that the dead animals drifted down the Park River, past his post, in "one continuous line in the current for two days and nights."(1) At one time the bison population on the Great Plains of America is estimated to have been between fifty and sixty million head.(2) Its Canadian habitat was "a triangular area, of which the base was the international boundary, the perpendicular the Rocky Mountains, and the third side a line running from the Peace River by Great Slave Lake and Lakes Athabaska and Winnipeg to the Red River District."(3) Within this area were two main herds, which migrated north and south, according to the food supply.(4) The western herd wintered "between the South and North branches of the Saskatchewan, and south of the Touchwood Hills; they cross the South Branch in June and July, visit the prairies on the south side of the Touchwood Hills range, and cross the Qu'Appelle Valley anywhere between the Elbow of the South Branch, and a few miles west of Fort Ellice on the Assiniboine. They then strike for the Grande Coteau de Missouri, and their eastern flank often approaches the Red River herds coming north from the Grand Coteau. They then proceed across the Missouri up the Yellow Stone, and return to the Saskatchewan as winter approaches, by the flanks of the Rocky Mountains."(5) The conspicuous feature is that these animals tended to move north in the winter and south in the summer.

---

(1) For a brief but excellent study of the Plains see A.S. Morton - Under western skies, pp. 1-7.

(2) Henry & Thompson - New light on the early history of the Greater Northwest, p. 167.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 169-70.

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 174. See also John McDougall's Journal in Masson - Le bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-ouest, I, p. 294.

(2) Merriman - The bison and the fur trade, p. 2.

(3) Merriman - op. cit. pp. 1-2.

(4) See Morton - op. cit. pp. 4-25, for a very clear picture of the bison, its habits and its importance to the early economics of the Plains. Two varieties of this animal have been identified, (a) Bison bison (Linn). or Bison americanus whose habitat was the open Plains and (b) Bison bison athabascae (Rhoads), which inhabited the wooded country to the north.
See Thompson - David Thompson's narrative, p. 558.
Hornaday - The extermination of the American bison.
Turner - The story of the "buffalo". This is an excellent, informative sketch of the later history of the bison herds.
Brown - The buffalo drive; an echo of a western romance.

(5) Morton - op. cit. p. 9.

It was, of course, upon the bison that the Indians of the Plains chiefly depended for a livelihood. From it they derived food, clothing, material for shelters, tools, and even ornaments. Just as our culture is based upon the cereals, so that of the Plains Indian was based upon the bison. The thoughts and the daily life of the people were orientated to it; their political and social organization developed around it. But the bison was not by any means the only support of the Indians. Deer, antelope, porcupine, bears, sheep,(1) and a host of smaller animals were abundant. Blackfoot country, however, was not rich in either moose or beaver.(2) Of vegetable foods the region had a fair share. The service-berry, chokecherry, and bull-berry were prized delicacies and from the farthest foothills, where only it could be obtained, the camas root. Another popular root was the "prairie turnip", called "mats" by the Blackfeet, and "pomme blanche" by the traders.

It was not a matter of great difficulty to obtain a living in such a country. Food was usually abundant; the staple was the bison but there were enough other kinds of animal and plant life to lend variety. However, some form of community life was almost essential, and even at that, starvation was not an unheard of occurrence.

Habitat

The habitat of the Blackfeet I shall define as all that territory for which there is historical evidence of occupation on their part from any date falling within the limits of this study. It is true that there is much reason to believe that at the beginning of our period tribal habitats of the Plains Indians were unsettled,(3) but it would lead us too far afield to study these migrations. As I have defined it above, the Blackfoot habitat corresponds very closely with that generally accepted as the historical home of these people. Tribal boundaries, it should be remembered, are more difficult to define than those of more advanced peoples; and in the present case, the historical geography is frequently unsatisfactory, as might be expected for a country which is being penetrated for the first time. However, even if boundaries cannot be defined with scientific accuracy, they can be given very satisfactorily in terms of rivers, hills, or other topographical features, which were, in the final analysis, the very bounds which the Indians themselves recognized.(1)

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(1) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 3. The "goats" which Henday (York Factory to the Blackfeet country, p. 336) saw so frequently may have been the same animal; it is very unlikely that it was the musk-ox.

(2) The lack of good beaver-meadows deprived the Blackfeet of the goods wherewith to trade with the Europeans; they thereby acquired an undeserved reputation for worthlessness and laziness.

(3) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 15; Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history, p. 153.

For the sake of clarity, it should be explained here that by the term "Blackfeet" are meant all those Indians who spoke the language of the same name. These were all one people, linguistically, physically and culturally, though they were divided into three sub-tribes known as the Bloods, the Peigans and the Blackfeet proper. In order to avoid confusion, the last-mentioned division will be referred to throughout by the native name of "Siksika", and the three tribes as a whole by the term "Blackfeet". These sub-tribes seem to have had no political connections one with another, although they regarded themselves as one people, and although they are frequently referred to collectively as the Blackfoot Confederacy which also included at various times the Sarsi and the Gros Ventre.(2)

The earliest satisfactory definition of Blackfoot territory is to be found in the Henry & Thompson journals, whence comes the following quotation: "The Blackfeet, Bloods, and Peigans may be considered under one grand appellation of Slave Indians. The tract of land which they call their own at present begins on a line due S. from Fort Vermillion to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and up that stream to the foot of the Rocky mountains; then goes N. along the mountains until it strikes the N. Branch of the Saskatchewan, and down that stream to the Vermillion river. Painted Feather's band of Blackfeet are the most eastern; next to them are the Cold band of Blackfeet; near these again are the Bloods; and the Peigans or Picaneaux dwell along the foot of the mountains."(1) Taking this evidence as a starting point we may begin the task of defining the respective habitats of the three divisions.

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(1) For a general discussion of the subject, see Gilmore - Indian tribal boundary-lines and monuments.

(2) Jenness - The Indians of Canada, p. 319.

The Peigans, it seems, lived near the foothills; evidently, from Saskatchewan, according to Henry. Mackenzie would extend this somewhat when he says they dwelt upon the headwaters of the South Branch,(2) which would "comprise a large triangular portion of Alberta between the Belly and Bow Rivers."(3) Further on in his notes, Henry himself recorded that the Peigans "have been known to inhabit since their first intercourse with traders on the Saskatchewan" the country on the Bow River and as far south as the Missouri.(4) Wissler locates this area more specifically as that "below Rocky Mountain House toward the headwaters of the Milk and Marias Rivers."(5)

Mackenzie located the Bloods east of the Peigans on the same river (the South Saskatchewan).(2) They traded extensively with Henry at Fort Augustus;(6) and on October 3, 1810, he pitched tent with some Bloods near the mouth of the Clearwater River.(7) A party of the same tribe were at war on the Missouri in 1811.(8) And elsewhere he implies that the Bloods occupied a territory intermediate between the Peigans in the west and the Siksika on the east.(1) The conclusion seems to be, then, that the Bloods probably inhabited that tract of country which lies along the Red Deer River northward; they may have been free to range as far south as the Missouri but seem not to have dwelt north of the North Saskatchewan.(2)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 523-4. For a careful examination of evidence as to the habitats of these poeple see Wissler - op. cit. pp. 7-15. Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history.

(2) Mackenzie - Voyagè from Montreal, in 1789 and 1793. p. cxi.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 8.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 723.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.
Curtis - (The North American Indian, VI, p. 10), would seem to assign these people a somewhat more southerly home.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 508 et seq.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 638-9.

(8) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 736.

The Siksika remain to be considered. Anthony Henday, who was one of the earliest, if not the earliest European, to penetrate central Alberta, entered the "Muscuty" plains on August 13, 1754, and expected soon to "see plenty of Buffalo, and the Archithinue Indians hunting them on Horseback."(3) This remarkable explorer kept close to the border line between the Plains and the forest, being now in the one, and now in the other. On the date given he was somewhere in the region of the present Saskatoon and could hardly have been in Siksika country. On September 4, he was joined by "2 Archithinue Natives on Horse-back" near what is now Battleford;(4) on October 4, he arrived at the Siksika encampment, roughly in the vicinity of Settler, Alberta.(5) From this point onward Henday met large numbers of these people, so that it seems a fairly simple matter to say when he was or was not in Siksika territory. He did not, of course, distinguish between Siksika and other Blackfoot tribes; so for this detail we must rely on other evidence. Henry, as has been said, described the Siksika as the most easterly,(6) and Mackenzie seems to support him when he says the "Black-Feet" extend "downwards"(7) from the Bloods and Peigans on the South Saskatchewan;

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 524.

(2) See Wissler - op cit. p. 10, and Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 187. Informant A. claimed that the Bloods "lived in the centre and claimed as much as the rest." He had, incidentally, Blood affinities.

(3) Henday - York Factory to the Blackfeet country, p. 328.

(4) Henday - op cit. p. 331.

(5) Henday - op cit. p. 335.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 524.

(7) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxi.

"downwards" we interpret to have signified "northward" (or north-easterly) to Mackenzie. Lewis and Clark reported having met "Blackfeet Indians" in the region of the Tansy and Marias Rivers.(1) Briefly the Siksika habitat may be defined as that area lying between the North and South Branches of the Saskatchewan River, except for the region between the confluence which belonged anciently to the Gros Ventre,(2) especially along the Battle River. In more recent times at any rate the Siksika were living also further south, on the Bow River (3) and probably had appropriated a small strip of territory north of the 49th Parallel.(4)

To repeat then, the Peigans dwelt close to the foothills, from the headwaters of the North branch to the International Boundary Line or even farther south to the Missouri; the Bloods were located north-east, mainly in the country on both sides of the Red Deer River and as far north as Edmonton and south for a rather indefinite distance, but sporadically possibly as far as the Missouri; the Siksika being the eastern vanguard and dwelling between the eastern reaches of the North and South branches with the exception of the Gros Ventre country and in recent times expanding to the south. This southward thrust of the Siksika seems important enough to justify placing them south-east rather than north-east of the Bloods as is the case in some current distribution maps.(5) The 105th° Longitude W. has been given as the eastern limits of Blackfoot territory;(1) this seems a much more likely one than that of Medicine Hat.(2)

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(1) Lewis & Clark - History of the expedition under the command of Captains Lewis and Clark, II. pp. 363-4. The exact location is given as circ. 45° 17m. N. and 111° W. longitude from London.

For what it is worth, I give the ideas of an old Siksika (A) upon the habitat of his people. They dwelt, he said, from Edmonton and Fort Kipp, south to the Yellowstone, but wintered on the Red Deer and Bow. Occasionally they roamed as far south as Arizona and west to the coast.

(2) Mackenzie, op. cit. p. cxi.

(3) Curtis - op. cit. XVII. p. 187.

(4) Wissler - op cit. p. 12.

(5) See especially the map accompanying Jenness, op. cit. map.

To the north-east of the Blackfeet lived the Sarsi, a division of the Beaver tribe. They dwelt well toward the mountains above Rocky Mountain House and toward Edmonton;"(3) i.e., on the southern headquarters of the northern branch of the Saskatchewan, as Mackenzie observed.(4) North and east of the same river roamed the Crees;(5) the other eastern neighbours were the Gros Ventre. To the south were such tribes as the Crows, the Mandans, etc; while to the immediate west were Kutenai, who were now friends and now enemies.(6)

Tribal boundaries, though recognized with a fair degree of unanimity on the part of those most concerned, did not, however, prevent the Blackfeet from travelling far and wide, after they acquired horses, at any rate. Plunder and adventure were of course the prime motives which impelled men to risk their lives amongst strange tribes. And the Blackfeet were noteworthy for their daring. Until it was obliterated by the tide of white settlement, the Blackfeet continued to use what they called the Old North Trail, which, according to their tradition was the path by which they, as a nation, had come down from their northern home of prehistoric times.(7) How far north it went will probably never be known but tradition has it that "the right fork ran north into the Barren Lands as far as people live,"(8) which may mean the region of Lake

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(1) Hodge - Handbook of American Indians, Part 2, p. 570.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 1.

(2) Curtis - op. cit. XVIII. p. 177.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.

(4) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cx.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 12.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 13.

(7) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 434-5.
Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history, p. 160.
See also: Von Eikstedt - Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit, p. 818.

(8) McClintock - op. cit. p. 435.

Athabaska. The main portion of the trail is said to have followed the open country east of the Rockies south to Mexico.(1) Traditions, of course, are unreliable, but we need not be incredulous at the thought of the Blackfeet travelling so far afield, for there is good evidence of it. In fact, a word was coined, apparently, to designate the Spanish lands.(2) To Mackenzie, indeed, the Blackfeet were "the people who deal in horses, and take them in war-parties towards Mexico."(3) Occasionally, visits may have been made across the Mountains to the Pacific.(4) Certainly, the Blackfeet did not lead an altogether isolated existence.

Migrations

A possible former home from which the Blackfeet came has already been hinted at. There is much evidence to support the statement that the historical habitat had not long been occupied by them, but, on the other hand, no positive proof can be advanced as to whence they did come.

The Indians themselves have traditions of a former home. The old men of the tribe pointed to the north-east in Thompson's time as being the direction whence they came, and told him their course had always been to the south-west.(5) The Chipewyans, they told Grinnell, invaded their home and drove them that way.(6) If we probe farther back, we will find a tale, which, though it varies in details, is somewhat to this effect: that a buffalo killed by a hunter's arrow, was being cut up. The water ran out of its stomach in such quantities as to form a lake which cut off those members of the tribe who happened to be on one side from those on the other. Neither division has since seen or heard of the other, but tradition says the other half of the nation still lives somewhere in the north (or north-east).(1) Some would identify this body of water as Lesser Slave Lake.(2) But traditions are unsatisfactory and often contradictory; there is one, for example, to the effect that the Blackfeet came from the south-west, across the Rocky Mountains,(3) which however has no evidence to support it.(4)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 13. New Mexico might be more accurate.

(2) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 255.

(3) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxii.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 255; A. [Note: Letters refer to informants, see list at end of manuscript.]

(5) Thompson - op. cit. p. 348.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 177.

Fortunately, more substantial evidence of their movements is at hand. Mackenzie had "reason to think" that the three kindred tribes were travelling north-west;(5) Thompson maintained their course was always to the south-east.(6) This is about all the light that history can shed upon the primal home of these people, and it is, to say the least, conflicting.

We are on surer ground, however, when we say that when first encountered by traders they dwelt entirely north of the Red Deer River, rarely venturing to the south of it into the country which was then inhabited by Snakes, Crows and Dakotas.(7) Grinnell says it "is quite certain that not many generations back the Blackfeet lived on the North Saskatchewan River and north of that stream."(8) Roughly speaking, this is the territory between the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan Rivers, or more probable still, chiefly on both sides of the latter stream and rather sparingly south to the Red Deer. But this was no permanent home, for Thompson reports that since the traders came to the Saskatchewan they had advanced "for the distance of four hundred miles from the Eagle Hills to the Mountains near the Mississouri but this rapid advance may be mostly attributed to their being armed with guns and iron weapons."(1) This was a modern movement which even tradition allows to be more recent than the introduction of the horse.(2) And all the while, there were "30 or 40 tents (of Peigans) who seldom resort to the plains, either in summer or winter" but "generally inhabit the thick, woody country along the foot of the mountains ..."(3)

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(1) A. This is very similar to a Sarsi tradition.
See Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 91.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 3.
Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history, p. 161.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 17.
Hale - Report on the Blackfoot tribes, p. 700.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 156.

(5) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxii.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 348.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 158. Maclean - Canadian savage folk, p. 597.

(8) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 177.

The question arises: If the Blackfeet were plainly in the process of migration at the beginning of the historical period, where had their original home been? The tribe belongs linguistically to the Algonquian stock, of whom they are the remotest western outpost. Only the Crees connect them, through their narrow strip of territory, with their eastern cultural affinities with these people and their mythology is more closely akin to the Algonquian than to that of any other typical Plains tribe.(4) But the Crees, and in fact, practically all the Algonquian peoples, are forest-dwellers; if the Blackfeet are a branch of that stock, did they too once dwell in a forest region? Assuming a westward expansion on the part of the Algonquian stock, the inference is that the Blackfeet must have moved out from some part of the forest lands to the north or north-east of their historical home.(5)

Grinnell, who studied the problem closely, points out that the native Cree name of Lesser Slave Lake means "Blackfoot Lake".(6) In consideration of this and other linguistic evidence and cultural similarities between the Crees and the Blackfeet, and the fact that the latter were first met by Europeans considerably farther north than where the majority of them lived in more recent times, he inclines to locate them aboriginally "about Lesser Slave Lake, ranging between Peace River and the Saskatchewan, and having for their neighbours on the north the Beaver Indians."(1) It is possible that (a) the Chipewyans had at some time driven a wedge between Blackfeet and Cree, thus isolating the former or that (b) the two tribes were always contiguous. At some time they must have been so, though probably not at the beginning of the historical period. Yet in historical times the Crees, after they acquired firearms, drove the Chipewyans from much of their former country.(2) As for the Blackfeet, when first met by Europeans, they were a thoroughly equestrian, and presumably, typical Plains tribe, yet in an unanchored state. What made them take to the Plains, and when did they do so? We are assuming that these people were living somewhere in the north, probably on the forest margin; for some reason they left this territory and took to the Plains, dropping their old ways of life and becoming "Plains Indians."

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 348. See also Wissler - op. cit. p. 18.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 17.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 723-4.

(4) For a characterization of plains cultural phenomena see Wissler - Diffusion of culture in the Plains of North America, pp. 39-40.

(5) Wissler - Ethnographic problems of the Missouri - Saskatchewan area, pp. 199-200.

(6) Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history, p. 161.

There are two hypotheses for the peopling of the Plains. The first is that before the advent of the horse they were uninhabited and that possession of this animal induced the peripheral tribes to move out to the rich hunting grounds. The second is that the Plains were always inhabited by a scanty population of nomads, who, when they acquired the horse, rapidly increased in numbers, became more mobile and thereby brought on intertribal warfare on a large scale. The horse, according to the best evidence, could hardly have reached the Canadian prairies before 1700. Did the Blackfeet increase in the following hundred years from a small tribe which was being pushed out of its former home by the relatively weak Athabascan people into one of the most, if not the most, formidable of all the tribes on the northern Plains? Or did they have horses earlier than we suspect? Or shall we assume that the possession of the horse allowed a greater population increase than actually occurred? Or did the Indians dwelling on the Plains before the days of the horse have a population which compared favourably with that of later times? If they did, they must have been good hunters afoot, to whom the horse brought not an increased food supply, but increased warfare.

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(1) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 177.

(2) See Grinnell - Early Blackfoot history, p. 162.
Osgood - The distribution of the northern Athapaskan Indians, pp. 10-11.

A reasonable explanation for the Blackfoot migrations is somewhat as follows. Assuming that the Plains were at least sparsely populated before the arrival of the horse, the Blackfeet may either have been living on the forest margin somewhere to the north or north-east, or have already moved bodily to the Plains. In my opinion, the horse could not in any case have been the prime factor in determining their course of action. They must have been already, like bees, "ready for swarming"; migrations out of old territories into new have occurred time out of number all over the world and their causes are still often very obscure. Pressure from the northern parts is a less satisfactory explanation perhaps than the lure of an easier life on the prairie, but the true cause will probably never be known. Once out on the Plains, however, the advent of the horse would throw all into a ferment. It is not difficult to image the more southern tribes, like the Snakes, immediately pressing northwards and quickly arrogating the entire territory to themselves. Like an electric shock, the horse vitalized all the tribes. To hold what one had, much less to acquire more, it was absolutely essential to obtain horses. Once this relentless struggle began, the Blackfeet must have been faced with the alternative of becoming master of the situation or being forced back to the niggardly forest. They, being the marginal tribe, would be faced more squarely with this dilemma than any other, and being a virile people, revitalized with the energy that a recent change of climate and conditions brings, would naturally set resolutely about the task. In a short space of time, they did become a nation of horsemen, and they were pushing vigorously towards the south-west, driving back the Snakes, the Sioux and others who threatened to deprive them of the land which meant their very existence.

It is true that this does not furnish any reason for the movement in the first place of these people to the Plains. There would, of course, be at least a mild pressure from the north towards the more hospitable south; but it may never have been very great. The movement must have been initiated, moreover, before the Cree expansion westward impelled by the lure of beaver for trade, so that the Crees are evidently not responsible. Probably overpopulation and the growing attractiveness of prairie life are as good motives as any that can be suggested. And when the horse became known and appreciated, the lure of the prairie would increase tenfold. Finally, there was the alternative of being either extinguished or driven back to the forest by southern tribes pushing north. None of these precludes the possibility of the Blackfeet's having lived, at least marginally, on the prairies for centuries. Wissler is one of the opinion that the revolutionary change from the forest to Plains culture must have required a long period of time.(1) In the case of the Plains Cree it required but a few generations.(2)

Such an hypothesis, it seems to me, reconciles the various and sometimes conflicting evidences. Traditions of a northern origin, historical evidence of the early habitation of the Red Deer - North Saskatchewan area and of a south-western movement, and the continued forest-marginal habitat of a Peigan band dove-tail into the linguistic and cultural evidence to form a coherent hypothesis of a movement out of the forest which may well have taken place since A.D. 1492, on the analogy of similar movements in a neighbouring tribe, and the suggested motivation for such a movement seems not unreasonable. It is, indeed, but an acceptation and modification of Radin's hypothesis(3) that the Blackfeet are of Algonquian stock; limiting their forest existence to the duration of their stay in the north-eastern woodlands, suggesting that they may never have lived in the Mackenzie drainage, but affirming that they have dwelt for many centuries in the northern margin of the forest and the Plains; that the advent of the horse quickened a movement already initiated by some unknown agency, and limiting the active expansionist period to the era of the horse and European weapons. It offers also a satisfactory explanation for (a) the extreme scarcity of forest-culture traits, (b) the predominance of cultural similarities with other Plains tribes, (c) the cultural affinities with other Algonquian tribes, (d) the migration to the Plains in the first instance and the reason for the Blackfoot dominance in the second. Finally, it does not make it necessary to posit a stupendous rise in population after the coming of the horse.

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(1) Wissler - Publications on the Indians of the Plains, p. 564.

(2) See Strong - The Plains culture area in the light of archaeology, p. 285.

(3) Radin - The story of the American Indians, p. 303.

Physical Appearance

There are, of course, no authoritative paintings of Blackfeet from the early period, so we are forced to rely on the written word for descriptions of their personal appearance. And the written word is not always satisfactory; Harmon, for example, must have been but a poor observer or he would not have put it on paper that he saw "no material difference in the size, features and complexion of the different tribes, with whom I have been acquainted."(1) A few scraps of information on this point are to be found in the early narratives. The younger Henry, who was always a severe critic of the Indian, even to the point of absurdity at times, was constrained to admit that the Blackfeet were "in general remarkably stout, tall, and well-proportioned men."(2) In Thompson's eyes, the Peigans, at least, appeared somewhat differently. "The Peeagans and their allies of the Plains with us, would not be counted handsome. From infancy they are exposed to the weather and have not that softness of expression in their countenances which is so pleasing, but they are a fine race of men, tall and muscular, with manly features, and intelligent countenances, the eye large, black and piercing, the nose full and generally straight, the teeth regular and white, the hair long, straight and black; their beards, apparently, would be equal to those of white men, did they not continually attempt to eradicate it, for when (they are) grown old and no longer pluck out the

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(1) Harmon - A journal of voyages and travels in the interior of North America, p. 271.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 524.

Red Leggings and Norman Calf Child.
(Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

hairs they have more beard than could naturally be expected. Their color is something like that of a Spaniard from the south of Spain, and some like that of the French of the south of France, and this comparison is drawn from seeing them when bathing together."(1) To this Henry can but add that "Their complexion is rather swarthy, although they frequently have a fair skin and grey eyes with light hair."(2) In the matter of skin-colour, Wissler employs the term "reddish chocolate ... with occasional leanings toward the yellow among some Blackfoot."(3) This reference to a light complexion is important because it is very rarely met with among Indians though not uncommon on the Upper Missouri.

Undoubtedly McClintock is justified in describing the old generations of Blackfeet as "physically a splendid people, virile and warlike, of high intelligence, proud in the bearing and fine looking."(4) They were distinctively aristocratic in appearance;(5) the untamed riders and lords of the Great Plains. The face of the Blackfoot has been described as "rather rounded and delicate,"(6) though many of them were decidedly long-headed, the nose "markedly aquiline and the arch high."(7) In stature, they tended to tallness,(8) "and of firm compact build, not given to corpulency as are some Indians."(9) Undoubtedly, they seem to have been the almost perfectly developed race which we should expect in one having an abundant supply of wholesome food, living, at the same time, where all conditions, social as well as physical, operated to eliminate the unfit.

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. pp. 347-8.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 524-5.

(3) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 148.

(4) McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfoot, p. 4.

(5) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 1 & 6.
Barbeau - The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies, p. 201.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 150.

(7) Barbeau - op. cit. p. 201.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 148.
Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 197.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 6.

(9) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 12.

Blackfoot children, as in all other Indian tribes, were often uncommonly attractive. The men seem to retain their good appearances longer than the women, who from Thompson's(1) time to the present do not enjoy a reputation for any special attractiveness.(2) In fact they are said to have had a masculine appearance which was probably due to the selective principle which has doubtless operated for untold generations in the matter of marriage.(3) And as old age creeps on, the appearance of both sexes usually suffered; a life-time of scanning the prairie bathed in a flood of summer sunlight, or squinting across the white snow-fields of winter inevitably brings its crop of wrinkles, and with it a peculiar scrutinous characteristic in the glance. Add to this an increasing disregard of personal appearance, which became a matter of no earthly moment to an old Indian woman long past the period of usefulness and the picture is not an attractive one. But at the height of their vigour the men, at least, must have been fit subjects for the artist or models for the athlete. Thompson "was often vexed at the comparison" when he saw an Indian and a white man walking together. "The Indian with his arms folded in his robe seems to glide over the ground; and the white people seldom in an erect posture, their bodies swaying from right to left, and some with their arms, as if to saw a passage through the air."(4)

Aside from the consequences of the diseases introduced by Europeans, we know very little concerning the state of health of the Blackfeet in early times. Harmon has an interesting comment that "The Indians in general are subject to few diseases. The venereal complaint is common to all the tribes of the north; many persons among them, die of consumption;

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197.

(3) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 12.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

fevers, also, frequently attack them, and they are likewise troubled with pains in the heads, breasts and joints. Many of them, and especially the women, are subject to fits."(1) Perhaps the two first mentioned were introduced by white men, but it is impossible to say definitely. Misfortunes of another order were recorded by the observant younger Henry: "Idiotism," he says "is rather uncommon among the Slaves; but I knew a full-grown Blackfoot of Painted Feather's band who was deaf and dumb from infancy, yet frequently accompanied his fellowmen to war; and they said he was brave and foolhardy, never wishing to retreat. Blindness is rare, except from accident or old age."(2) How vastly have conditions changed since this was written!

Character

It is interesting to read the varied opinions of early writers with regard to the character of the Blackfeet. Henry admitted that they were the most happy and independent people of the Rocky Mountains.(3) Cocking thought them a "brave people, & far superior to any tribes" that visited his forts,(4) and "in all their actions they far excell the other Natives."(5) Umfreville found them temperate folk who bought themselves "necessaries for war, and domestic conveniences."(6)

Of the Siksika clans, Painted Feather's was the "most civilized and well disposed"; the Cold clan, "notoriously a set of audacious villains."(7) But, even at that, the Bloods surpassed them;(7) they were, like the Fall or Gros Ventre Indians, "vicious, blood-thirsty and turbulent"; but "not so brave."(1) At the forts they were "very troublesome, beggarly, difficult to trade with, and always inclined to mischief."(1)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 271. For a discussion of European diseases amongst the Indians see Jenness - op. cit. pp. 251-3.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 736-7.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 737.

(4) Cocking - Matthew Cocking's journal, p. 110.

(5) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(6) Umfreville - Present state of Hudson's Bay, p. 201.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530.

The Peigans alone of all the Blackfeet came in for any praise from Henry, probably because they were the "best disposed toward us of all the Indians in the Plains."(2) But even they were proud and haughty, imagining "themselves to be a superior race, braver and more virtuous than their own countrymen."(3) While the truth of the idea is admitted, this attribute was born of necessity, "surrounded as they are by enemies with whom they are always at war," who kept them too busy "to indulge the grosser vices or to arrogate to themselves the attributes of supreme beings." The inference is that they would have committed these horrible crimes if they had had the opportunity. But we must remember that we are looking through Henry's very dark glasses, and a moment's reflection will convince us of the desirability of examining native character more closely and through less prejudiced eyes.

As Thompson noted of the Peigans, "almost every character in civilized life can be traced among them, from the gravity of a judge to a merry jester, and from open hearted generosity to the avaricious miser."(4) As he wisely observes in this same connection, "Civilized Men have many things to engage their attention and to take up their time, but the Indian is very different, hunting is his business, and not his amusement, and even in this he is limited for want of ammunition hence his whole life is in the enjoyment of his passions, desires and affections contracted within a small circle, and in which it is often intense."(5) In other words, their emotions were undisciplined and their outlook narrow.

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 736.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 722; See Thompson - op. cit. p. 346.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 355.

(5) Thompson - op. cit. pp. 348-9.

It is not surprising, therefore to read in Thompson that "Indians are noted for their apathy," which "is more assumed than real,"(1) on the one hand; and on the other, in Henry, that the "Slaves" "are much given to gusts of passion ..." which "as quickly subsides" and that they "are fickle and changeable; no confidence can be placed in them; the most trifling circumstance will change their mind."(2) The two points of view are characteristic of the writers, and are complimentary to each other. As for the Indians' stoicism, "in public he wishes to appear that nothing can affect him, but in private he feels and expresses himself sensible to everything that happens to him or his family."(1) Jefferson noted the same characteristic among the Crees: "he can laugh and joke with the rest, indeed they do not take life seriously enough, for with them life seems to be one long song and dance, -- especially dance."(3) As Grinnell says, "These people are generally talkative, merry and light-hearted; they delighted in fun, and were a race of jokers. It is true that in the presence of strangers, they were grave, silent and reserved, but this is nothing more than the shyness and embarrassment felt by a child in the presence of strangers. As the Indian becomes acquainted, this reserve wears off; he is at ease again and appears in his true colours, a light-hearted child. Certainly the Blackfeet were never a taciturn and gloomy people. Before the disappearance of the buffalo, they were happy and cheerful."(4) Curtis found the Peigans "particularly tractable and likeable."(5) Like all other human beings the men were "proud of being noticed and praised as good hunters, warriors or any other masculine accomplishment."(1)

If we may be permitted to draw literary inferences, we may assume that Henry considered haughtiness a fault, since he uses it in connection with the Peigan about whom, as about all other Indians, he seldom has a good word to say. "They are proud and haughty and studiously avoid the company of their allies further than is necessary for their own safety."(1) But these same young men who "appear proud and haughty" are "particular to keep their robes clean."(2) That surely was not to be deprecated. Cocking, too, thought the Blackfeet were "much more cleanly in their cloathing, & food," than the Assiniboines who accompanied him.(3)

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 355.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 727.

(3) Jefferson - Fifty years on the Saskatchewan, p. 53.
See Harmon - op. cit. p. 312.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 181.

(5) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 11.

As Jefferson found the Cree, so we may safely assume were the Blackfeet. "In his own way, the Indian is energetic, patient and tireless. He will work like a demon, always in a good humour that neither difficulties nor discomforts can disturb."(4) Henry maintained the Blackfeet "despised labour" but most people who lived in a country where life was as easy as it was on the Plains at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century would fall victims to their natural distaste of labour. They had all the necessities of life at hand, and moreover, there is reason to believe that even at this early date the Indians sensed the incipient dependence upon the economics of the encroaching white culture and instinctively shrank from it. Hunting and trapping for furs to sell were therefore not only superfluous to a full existence but a dim realization of what it spelled may have tended to discourage them. Henry's criticism of their spiritless hunting should not at all be attributed to innate laziness; every careful student will realize the necessity of interpreting all characteristics of a people in terms of the totality of their culture and will avoid the unfairness of judging them by our standards.

The Siksika "behave very kindly to those of our people who pass the winter with them, and none of them have as yet received any injury under their protection either in person or effects."(1) Evidently the ordinary canons of primitive hospitality were observed by these people, for the good-natured Cocking also found them "very Hospitable, continually inviting us to partake of their best fare."(2) Amongst themselves, too, liberality was a respected virtue. "Especially in provisions is great attention paid to those who are unfortunate in the chase, and the tent of a sick man is well supplied."(3) But to have to ask for assistance was an unthinkable disgrace. "They (Peigans) have a haughtiness of character, that let their wants be what they will they will not ask assistance from each other, it must be given voluntarily."(3) No wonder then that misers were so thoroughly detested.(3)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 722.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(3) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(4) Jefferson - op. cit. p. 52.

Population

Henday's estimate in 1754-55 of "200 tents of Archithinue Natives"(4) is undoubtedly the earliest record of the population of these people. But it is not as valuable as it might have been for we cannot be absolutely sure whether he met Siksika or another tribe(5) of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The former is the more probable, but even so, it is unlikely he saw all even of that tribe. Other estimates vary from 300 tents(6) (or probably 2400 people) to 800 men.(7) For two bands, Henry estimated 200 tents or 420 warriors. If these figures be tabulated and we allow eight persons to a tipi, or three individuals to every man mentioned by Mackenzie, we will see that the results cluster around 2500 (excepting the estimates of Henday and Henry, which we therefore conclude must have been but partial). All things considered it seems safe to say the Siksika could show something like this population.

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(1) Umfreville - op. cit. p. 201.

(2) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 356.

(4) Henday - op. cit. p. 337.

(5) In this connection see Wissler - Population changes among the Northern Plains Indians, p. 5.

(6) Hind - North West Territory, reports of progress, p. 115; 300 tents.
Douglas - Private papers (after Jenness - op. cit. p. 324).
Franklin - Narrative of a journey to the shores of the polar seas in the years 1819-20, 21-22, I, p. 169; 350 tents.

(7) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxi.

From 50(1) to 400 tipis(2) are reported for the Bloods. The spread here is too great to permit well-founded conclusions being drawn. As Mackenzie's estimates are usually considered reliable, we may assume for the present, a Blood population of "two hundred and fifty men", or probably well-nigh 1000 individuals. One strong argument against this, however, is, that if this number be accepted, then the Bloods alone have increased since Mackenzie's time, whereas other tribes have dwindled to almost half, -- a rather untenable hypothesis.(3)

The estimates for the Peigans vary from 100 to 500 tipis.(4) In this case Mackenzie tells us they numbered "from twelve to fifteen hundred men."(1) If we put any value on Thompson's observation that the "grown-up population of these people appear to be about three men to every five women" and we allow one child to each adult, we derive, from Mackenzie's estimate of the number of men, a Peigan population of about 8,000. Curtis is inclined to accept Mackenzie's estimate, which he works out to be about 8,500.(5) As Mackenzie visited the tribes in

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(1) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxi.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530; 200 warriors.
Franklin - op. cit. p. 169; 300 tents.
Douglas - op. cit.; 400 tents.
Hind - op. cit.; 250 tents.

(3) Canada - Census of the Indians of Canada 1934, p. 28, gives the Bloods a population of 1293.
Jenness - op. cit. p. 324, credits the Blackfeet with an ancient population of about 9,000.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 530 & 722; 150 tents.
Franklin - op. cit. p. 169; 400 tents.
Hind - op. cit. p. 115; 400 tents.
Douglas - op. cit.; 500 tents.

(5) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 5.

1789, or about eighty years after the first great epidemic, the Peigans must have been originally even more numerous.

The Sarsi were credited, by Mackenzie, with "about thirty-five tents, or one hundred and twenty men"(1); by Franklin with 150 tents;(2) and by Douglas, with 100 tents.(3)

It will be noted though that of the two earliest explorers, Mackenzie and Henry, the former usually receives the more credence in the matter of estimates.(4) Henry's figures are nearly always lower than those of any one else and there seems reasonable ground for believing that some groups escaped his notice. According to Henry's tabulated summary of tribal population, there were 1,420 warriors in the Confederacy, excluding the Sarsi. If we add up Mackenzie's figures we find about 2,700 men in the Confederacy including the 120 Sarsi. If we apply Thompson's ratio to these figures we derive a total population of 8,200 about 20 years after the epidemic according to Henry, and of 14,400 according to Mackenzie, eight years after the same disaster. The generally accepted derivation of total population from Mackenzie's figures amounts to 9,000; this allows no majority of numbers to the women, which the prevalence of polygamy tells us there must have been. Thompson's ratio seems a perfectly valid one, and we feel that it ought to be applied. Likewise the ratio of one child to one adult must have held good. If these two rules be used, the derived population using Mackenzie's figures could not have been less than the above; the actual population two decades earlier must have been even greater.

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(1) Mackenzie - op. cit. pp. cx- cxi.

(2) Franklin - op. cit. p. 170.

(3) Douglas - op. cit.
Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 92, seems to have gone far astray in his estimate of Sarsi population.

(4) Jenness - op. cit. p. 324.
Hodge - op. cit., pt. 2, p. 571.
Curtis - op. cit., IV, p. 5.

CHAPTER II.

-- THE LIFE CYCLE --

For the sake of simplicity, it seems best to describe the progress of life among the Blackfeet from the cradle to the grave. Not every phase of Blackfoot life by any means is touched upon. A man's progress, for instance, through the elaborate system of age-grade societies, which was an integral part of every self-respecting male Blackfoot's career, is not discussed at all. Only customs attendant upon what might be termed the vital phases are explained -- birth, the training for life, marriage and death.

Childbirth

At one time or another a good deal has been written concerning childbirth among these poeple. Apparently Harmon and West left the first accounts of this first phase of the life cycle amongst the Canadian Plains Indians.

In a race so inured to hardship one would naturally expect the maternal mortality rate to be low; it is but the law of the survival of the fittest operating in one of its most potent fields. Harmon noticed that "Indian women appear to suffer less pain in childbirth, than women in civilized countries."(1) This is a general statement, which West bears out with regard specifically to the Crees, who considered it "an event of trifling nature."(2) Indeed, the latter women "suffer more from parturition with half-breed children than when the father is an Indian ... When taken to live with white men, they have larger families, and at the same time, are liable to more diseases consequent upon it, than in their wild and wandering state."(1)

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(1) Harmon - A journal of voyages and travels, p. 300.

(2) West - The substance of a journal during a residence at the Red River colony, p. 54.
See Smith - J.B. Trudeau's remarks on the Indians of the Upper Missouri, 1794-95, pp. 567-8. -- "for they bring forth their young ones with a facility of which our civilized ladies have little idea."

However this may have been, it was "not an uncommon case for a woman to be taken in labour, step aside from the party she is travelling with, and overtake them in the evening, at their encampment, with a newborn infant on her back."(1) Grinnell says that in a similar case within his personal knowledge, a Blackfoot woman overtook the camp inside of four hours.(2)

Generally speaking, some arrangements were made for the occasion, and not left to chance as the above remarks might suggest. As a rule, the woman repaired to a tipi erected for the purpose and belonging to some old female of the camp.(3) Harmon describes it as a small hut erected by her at a little distance from the tent in which she usually lived.(4) Invitations may have been sent to the old women to come to assist;(4) in any case, four were usually present (four being a mystic number among the Blackfeet). Decoctions of several roots were prepared for the patient to drink, but it is doubtful if the Blackfeet, at any rate, drank the water in which the rattle of a rattlesnake had been boiled.(5) The decoctions were supposed to ease the pain and to facilitate delivery.(6) According to Harmon,(5) the patient leaned over some object about two feet high, with her knees on the ground; but Wissler's statement that she held to the pole of a tipi seems more likely.(7) One old woman held the patient around the chest; another around the waist, bearing down; and another acted as midwife; the fourth assisted in any way that occasion demanded.(3)

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(1) West - op. cit. p. 54.

(2) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, pp. 197-8.

(3) B.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 299; Grinnell - Childbirth among the Blackfeet, p. 286.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 300.

(6) Wissler - Social organization, p. 28; B.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 28.

As soon as the child was born it was washed in water (which may have been prepared as Harmon describes by boiling in it a sweet-scented root).(1) The afterbirth and umbilical cord were taken out and either buried or thrown down a gopher-hole.(2) The mother was "laced up with a piece of skin or rawhide as a support. She is required to walk or creep about in the tipi for a while instead of resting quietly, in the belief that recovery will be hastened thereby."(3) According to my informant, the patient was not allowed to sleep for four days and four nights, and old women took turns in sitting up with her to keep her awake. She was roused every few minutes and made to turn over to the other side (evidently she was allowed to lie down and not made to walk around as Wissler says). The reason given is that if the patient were allowed to lie still for any length of time the blood would clot and cause death, which the rolling motion prevented. At the end of the fourth night the patient was completely exhausted and had turned a pale yellow.(4)

The mother remained in the tipi for some time, probably ten days,(4) but it is most unlikely that she stayed for thirty days, among the Blackfeet.(5) Wissler asserts that when the time of delivery approached the patient discarded her jewellery and metal ornaments, dressed in old clothes and affected carelessness of person,(6) which seems in consonance with the statement that at the end of the period of isolation she dressed in her best clothes to return to her own tipi,(4) which, before donning, she held in incense smoke in order to renew life.(7)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit., p. 28; B.

(2) According to Grinnell - op. cit. p. 286, it could be disposed of variously, as by throwing in the river or hanging in a tree; B.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 28. F. confirms this by saying that a wide rawhide belt was tied tightly around the waist.

(4) B.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 299.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 28.

(7) F.

During the period of isolation no man, not even the father of the child, would enter the tipi on any account.(1) Everything touched by the mother seems to have been particularly dangerous for a man; the afterbirth was so potent in this regard that he dared not approach where it had been deposited, and the blood was taboo.(2)

According to Thompson, the number of births appeared "in favour of the boys."(3)

The following description of the first few days of life is interesting: "When the child is born it is taken by the doctor and certain ceremonies follow. The child is washed in cold water. The umbilicus is cut, but not with a knife; an arrowhead must be used. Then the midwife lays the child upon the ground and she and her assistants - if she has any - get out their red paint and offer up prayers, asking for health and good luck for the infant. If it is a girl, they pray that she may be virtuous and be like the good mothers of the camp; that she may be guided aright in all her ways through life and may long survive. For a boy they pray that he may have long life; that he may be a brave man, may have a kind heart, and may be a worthy person among his people.

"After these prayers are ended they paint the child red over the whole person ...

The next morning the midwife is asked in again and the child is again washed in cold water, the paint being all washed off. The same prayer first made is repeated, and the child is painted again. For this a small fee is given.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 299; B.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 28;
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 286, says the father might enter for just a short time.

(2) F.

(3) Thompson - David Thompson's narrative, p. 352.
Footnote: Harmon's account of childbirth is evidently a confusion of Blackfoot and Cree customs. Except for the feasts, the prayer to the Master of Life, and the 30-day isolation periods, it may be accepted as descriptive of the Blackfeet, however.

That evening the child is again washed clean. Sometimes the infant is painted only once or twice, sometimes every day for ten days or two weeks, the prayers being offered at each painting."(1)

After receiving his first bath, the baby was wrapped up in a buffalo skin with the hair on.(2) The skin was no doubt fashioned into a bag as described by Harmon.(3) His description was approved by one of my informants,(4) so I shall quote it in full: "All Indian children, when young, are laced in a kind of bag. This bag is made of a piece of leather, about two feet square, by drawing a string, inserted in the lower end, and lacing the two sides together. Some moss is placed in the bottom of this bag; the child is then laid into it, and moss is inserted between its legs. The bag is then laced the fore side of the child as high as its neck. This bag is laid upon a board, to which it is fastened by means of a strip of leather, passing several times round both the board and the bag. At the top of this board, a bow passes round from one side to the other, perpendicular to its surface, on which the Indians fasten small bells, which they obtain from us, or the claws of animals, by way of ornament, and which rattle, when the child is carried by its mother, suspended from her shoulders, by means of a cord or belt fastened to the board. From two points in this bow, equally distant from the board, two strips of leather, worked with porcupine quills, are suspended, at the ends of which, tassels, composed of moose hair, are fixed. This bag is commonly ornamented, in different parts, with porcupine quills. The women who are particular in keeping their children clean, shift the moss which is put into these bags, several times a day; but others do it not more than twice. They often fix conductors so that their male children never wet the moss." One of my informants asserted that instead of moss, a quantity of punky wood was used to keep the baby clean and dry.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 286-7.

(2) E.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 272.

(4) B.

But as for the cradle itself, Harmon's description does not tally closely with the cut to be seen in Mason's work in the subject, which is described thus: "Two strips of narrow board, often native hewn, wider and further apart at the upper end, are held in place by crosspieces lashed and apart just the length of the leather cradle sheath. This lashing is very ingeniuously done; four holes an inch apart are bored through the frame board and cross-piece at the corners of the square, a string of buckskin is passed backward and forward from hole to hole and the two ends tied, or one end is passed through a slit cut in the other. The lashing does not cross the square on either side diagonally. Above the upper cross-piece the frame pieces project a foot and are straightened atop like fence pickets. Disks of German silver and brass-headed nails are used in profusion to form various geometric ornaments; upon the front of the frame, between the cross-pieces, a strip of buffalo hide is sewn, with rawhide string passing through holes bored in with the hair side (the side pieces) towards the cradle-bed.

"The enclosing case is a shoe-shaped bag made of a single piece of soft deer-skin lashed together half way on top in the usual manner, and kept open around the face by a stiffening of buffalo leather or rawhide ... This case is attached to the frame by thong lashings. Little sleigh bells, bits of leather, feathers, etc., complete the ornamentation."(1)

Not all children had the luxury of such an elaborate cradle, however. They might be carried simply in their mothers' arms, or in a robe behind their backs and when travelling were "placed in sacks of skin on the tent pole."(2)

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(1) Mason - Cradles of the American aborigines, pp. 199-200.
See also Mason - Primitive travel and transportation, pp. 508-9.

(2) Mason, op. cit. of the American aborigines, pp. 199-200.

The Naming of Children

So satisfactory is Wissler's account of the manner of bestowing names that it seems needless to repeat here.(1) Suffice it to say, that while the father had the right to name his children, it was desirable to have a celebrated elder perform the office, in order that the child might be more likely to live to old age. Such an act was repaid with some small gift, such as a pair of moccasins.(2) While there were no hereditary or family names, it was very desirable to pass on a distinguished name to a son, which thus gave a semblance of heredity. The inspiration for a name might come from a dream, from an exploit of the giver, from some phenomenon of nature or from some characteristic of the individual to be named. Boys and men always changed their names once or more, but women seldom did so. If Harmon's account(3) (the only historical note referring to this phase of culture) be compared with Wissler's, it will be seen to be applicable to the Blackfeet, but at variance with Denig's description of the ceremony among the Assiniboine.(4)

Treatment and Education of Children

Indians have earned a reputation for kindness to their children, which is probably merited. Mackenzie mentions that the Cree were "indulgent to a fault" to their children(5) and Thompson bears similar testimony.(6) Harmon says that Indians seldom chastised their children "and indeed it is not necessary, for they appear, in general, to have much affection and respect for their parents, and are therefore, ready to obey them."(1) Although Franklin, speaking of the Blackfeet, has a passage in which he says that "Women, who have been guilty of infanticide never reach the mountain at all" (i.e., the "happy hunting-ground" of the Blackfeet),(2) my informant scoffed at the idea, remarking that infanticide was unknown among them, so strong is parental affection.(3) True it was that "The Natives of all these countries are fond of their children,"(4) but this could not prevent their giving them "considerable attention and some discipline,"(5) although culprits were "not corrected by being beat. Contempt and ridicule are the correctives employed, these shame them, without breaking their spirits. And as they are all brought up in the open camp, the other children help the punishment."(4) We suspect Thompson did not know the whole story, for it seems certain, on the evidence of Wissler,(5) that old men were made responsible for giving each boy a ducking in the river; I was told this was only resorted to if the erring one overslept.(6) It was always admitted, however, that boys were regularly forced to take a morning dip no matter how cold the weather, or else to roll in the snow. Sometimes older boys were charged with the pleasant responsiblity of seeing that this rule was obeyed. Apparently, it was done, not as a punishment, but as a health measure, in the belief that the boy would grow up to be strong, sturdy and able to stand the rigours of winter.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 16-18. See also McClintock, Old North Trail, pp. 396-401.

(2) F.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. pp. 300-1.

(4) Denig - Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri, p. 516. See Jenness, op. cit. p. 312, and Lowie - The Assiniboine, p. 38.

(5) Mackenzie - Voyages from Montreal through the continent of North America, p. cxlv.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 93.

At any rate, correction depended less upon physical force than upon the effect of ridicule and the influence of public opinion. The obvious result was affection and respect for parents and that children were "therefore, ready to obey them."(1)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 301.

(2) Franklin - Narrative of a journey to the shores of the Polar seas, 1819-20, 21-22, p. 120.

(3) B.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 357.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 29.

(6) D.

In the way of general training, the child was taught to respect his elders, to be polite, to be a willing helper. "The ideal is the child that starts to perform the service before it is asked; or if asked, before the last work is uttered."(2) Religious obligations were a vital part of the educational routine. "From the first, children are taught to respect all the taboos of the medicine bundles owned by the family and those of their relations and guests."(3) Morals seem to have been stressed more with the girls than with the boys. "Girls are taught to be kind and helpful, to be always willing to lend a hand, to be virtuous and later, to respect their marriage vows. Special stress is laid upon virtue as a "fast" girl is a disgrace to all her relations."(3)

Mothers were in charge of their daughters' education; fathers of their sons'. This demarcation went so far as to result, in case of separation, in the mother's taking her daughters with her, while the sons followed their father.(4)

As one would expect, the father's prime concern was to teach his son to earn his livelihood.(1) When about four years old, boys seem to have been given bows and arrows, and allowed to shoot at a mark; "and to render this employment more interesting they always have something at stake, which is generally nothing more than an arrow, or something of small value."(5) Sometimes a stiff hide was used as a target, probably by the older boys (for practice was kept up according to Harmon, till the age of 18 or 20 years); until he was able to pierce it with his arrow a boy might not cease practising; when the feat was achieved, it seems he was no longer considered a novice. Practice upon gophers and small birds was encouraged, because it gave practical experience in the taking of game.(1) When he was old enough, the boy was trained how to stalk buffalo and antelope, and when he had acquired sufficient skill his father took him with him on the hunt,(2) in the deeper secrets of which he was then instructed.

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(1) Harmon - op cit. p. 301.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 30.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 29.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 357.

(5) Harmon - op cit. p. 311.

But hunters need arrows, and the boy was taught the art of making them.(2) Even the cutting up of the buffalo was demonstrated as opportunity offered.(2) More servile duties included the preparation of the father's horses before breakfast, ready for his use early in the morning; the occasional preparation of the shelter, of the fire, and even the cooking of pemmican. All this was done with an eye to making him self-sufficient when on the warpath, far from his helpful kindred.(2)

Young Blackfeet were, for all this seeming activity, free to do as they liked for a great part of the time. No doubt swimming occupied much of their leisure for every man was expected to be proficient in the art.(2) Riding was absolutely essential and we infer from Harmon that horse-racing may have been a youthful pastime.(3) The game of ball which the same author mentions as a diversion of the young men may not have been common among the Blackfeet,(4) since my informants did not think they had played it to any extent. Needless to observe, all Blackfeet took to smoking early; the boys were taught to do so about the age of 12, in the belief that the practice would make them strong.(5)

As boys grew into youths, certain duties in connection with the camp life devolved upon them. None of them was dignified in nature, yet we may assume that it flattered his growing sense of responsibility.(6) Boys were, for instance, commissioned to carry presents of tobacco to the scattered members of the tribe, as invitations to the "general council" to be held in the spring.(1) Or they might be responsible for the preservation of order within the camp, provided they had joined one of the so-called "Soldier-societies", or age-grades, through which all self-respecting tribesmen must pass.(2) If they failed in their duty, their clothes would be torn to shreds.(3) Probably more gratifying, because it certainly provided an outlet for abundant energy, was the buffalo hunt. Skillful young horsemen were detailed off to ride out to the open plains and herd the animals into the enclosures. This required a great deal of riding ability and was a sure means of winning favour in the tribe.

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(1) E.

(2) D.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 311; also pp. 285-6.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 312.

(5) E.

(6) See Gilmore - The old-time method of rearing a Dakota boy.

With much leisure on their hands, "many of the young men are as fine dandies as they can make themselves."(4) Says Thompson, "I have known some of them to take full an hour to paint their faces with White, Red, Green, Blue and Yellow, or part of these colors, with their looking glasses, and advising one another, how to lay on the different colors in stripes, circles, dots and other fancies; then stand for part of the day in some place of the camp to be admired by the women."(4) Probably this description is accurate enough, although red, white and yellow are said to have been the only colors used in olden times, except in the Chicken-dance when blue, green and black were added.(3) There were many designs which could be employed. If the youth wearied of the camp, he might retire to the hills, where he could sit and signal to the girl of his choice with a piece of glass. If she wished to risk her reputation, (a grave offence in Blackfoot eyes), she might join him.(5)

The foibles of the young men were tolerated cheerfully by their elders. Henry related of the Peigans that "some must have a person to cut their meat into small pieces ready to eat."(1) Mothers regularly indulged their sons thus till the age, sometimes, of thirty.(2) To prove their valour, young braves held red-hot pipe-bowls against the flesh of their arms, somewhat in the nature of an endurance test. No religious significance, however, seems to have attached to the practice, which probably died out about a generation ago.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 306.

(2) D. calls this society the "Black-Holders".

(3) D.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(5) D. Apparently such relations were considered strictly illicit.

Young men considered themselves as under their fathers' control until they married.(3)

The Occupations of Men

Since the theme of our study is, in the final analysis, the life, and therefore the occupations, of the men and women of the Blackfoot tribe, it hardly seems necessary to devote special attention to them. But a few general remarks may be useful.

Broadly speaking, the securing of food, war, feasts and dancing were activities in which all men had to participate. Following the buffalo from place to place(4) was the fundamental necessity imposed upon them by their environment. Food being abundant, the Peigans "despised labour";(5) and since they had much spare time on their hands, they turned to games and gambling to pass dreary hours. Feasts and dancing, often grown to the stature of complex institutions, also helped to relieve the tedium. It is unnecessary to speak of the many days each man had to spend in making weapons, ceremonial objects, learning the lore of his people and so forth. But it may be worth while to draw attention to the the fact that the Blackfeet, being surrounded by enemies, were

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 727.

(2) D.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 301.

(4) Henday - York Factory to the Blackfeet country, p. 339.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

"obliged to assemble in large camps"(1) "in the open plains."(2) They "have powerful enemies which keep them constantly on the watch and are never secure but in large numbers."(3) "War, women, horses, and buffalo are all their delights, and all these they have at their command."(4) Yet the "Slaves generally appear to be the most independent and happy people of all the tribes E. of the Rocky Mountains."(4)

War and travel among foreign tribes were the two most thrilling adventures open to the Blackfoot man. Since there could not be "many remarkable Warriors and Hunters, a few mix with other tribes and learn their languages, and become acquainted with their countries and mode of hunting. Others turn Dreamers, and tell what other tribes are doing and intend to do; where the Bisons and Deer are most plenty; and how the weather will be."(5) This wandering off to live among other tribes had more far-reaching effects than might at first be apparent. These "students ... must have been a powerful factor in leveling the culture of the Plains area;"(6) so that their permanent influence was undoubtedly of profound significance.

The Occupations of Girls and Women

Naturally enough, traders were not much interested in the manner in which women spent their time, so that their journals are rather scant of information on the point. However, a few observations here may help to make the context of this work a trifle clearer.

We know, for instance, that a daughter received her training wholly from her mother.(7) From her she learned how to tan hides, cut

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 723.

(2) Henday - op. cit. p. 339.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 346.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 747.

(5) Thompson - op. cit. p. 366.

(6) Wissler - Diffusion of culture in the Plains of North America, p. 51.

(7) Harmon - op. cit. p. 301.

Woman in camp, meat drying rock in foreground. (Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

moccasins and dresses, and paint the bags for the sacred objects. She was also expected to know how to make the travois and the tipi; slice, dry and pack meat, make pemmican, pack it on her own and the dogs' backs, gather wood for the fire and the berries and wild roots for food.(1)

The unmarried girl was probably not overworked, but when she became a matron she usually became a drudge. It seems safe to say that all the labour performed within the camp was done by the women. The duty of the man in the nomadic state was confined to those matters which were of prime importance only, i.e., the securing of game for food, and the protection of the social organism. In this he specialized; all else was the concern of the woman. She gathered the roots, and the berries; cooked the food, prepared the pemmican, tanned the hides and made the clothing. "She is continually employed in drawing water, conveying wood, searching for horses, and every other kind of employment which the Husband thinks below the dignity of a Warrior."(2) The women, we are told, had "much difficulty in collecting firewood."(3) Cocking has a note: "Every person repairing the Beast pound"(4); the exigencies of the hunt would suggest that this statement is literally true, the women and children necessarily being included. "When they decamp, the women transport the baggage; and when they stop, while the men are quietly smoking their pipes, the women are required to pitch the tents, and to set the encampment in order.(5) So incapable are mere men, that even to-day, they cannot erect a simple tipi to the satisfaction of their wives;(6) if they attempt it, it is certain to be taken down and to be properly re-erected by them. Notwithstanding the fact that she was "obliged to undergo all the drudgery which occurs in the domestic affairs of the family,"(1) the Blackfoot woman had "a great advantage over the other Women who are either carrying or hauling on Sledges every day in the year"(2) since this tribe had already, in Cocking's time, learned the use of the "pack-horse."

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(1) D.

(2) M'Gillivray - Manuscript journal, p. 34.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 723.

(4) Cocking - Matthew Cocking's journal, p. 109.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 298.

(6) McClintock - The Blackfoot tipi, p. 95.

A good deal of the woman's time was devoted to the arts and crafts, both for strictly utilitarian and purely artistic ends. If pottery was made, as we are told it was,(3) there can be little doubt that it was a woman's craft. She it was, who embroidered the "beautiful designs with colored porcupine quills"(4) on the tanned skins. The wife "made her husband's clothing with even more care than her own and dressed him up in his finery as she would her child ... She also gave a great deal of attention to her own dress and appearance."(4) When a man set out to hunt, his wife prepared his mount for him; when he returned she removed the meat from its back. And when he retired at night, he ordered his wife to take off his moccasins and leggings, and to throw the covers over him.(5) The day's tasks, it seems, were never done.

Marriage

Though there was one fairly conventionalized procedure followed in the matter of marriage, there was a sufficient number of other ways in which unions were contracted to make it desirable to study the subject at some length.

There is no conclusive evidence as to the age at which marriages were contracted. Thompson wrote that among the Peigan "The young men seldom marry before they are fully grown, about the age of 22 years or more, and the women about sixteen to eighteen."(6) My informants said that twenty-one was the customary age at which girls marry now. Against this evidence, Grinnell asserts that "in the old days, before they had horses, young men did not expect to marry until they had almost reached middle life, - from thirty-five to forty years of age ... In those days, young women did not marry until they were grown up, while of late years fathers not infrequently sell their daughters as wives when they are only children."(1) We may be fairly certain, however, that men did not marry much before "they were fully grown," because, firstly, it was desirable to have performed some notable deed, and secondly to have proved one's ability as a hunter and provider before seeking a mate. He would most likely go to war, in order to prove himself a brave man, and also to obtain horses with which to purchase his wife.(2) As for the age of the girl, Thompson's statement seems perfectly in consonance with the general tendency among primitive peoples, but McClintock says they were generally married about 14 years of age, and sometimes as young as eight.(3)

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(1) M'Gillivray - op. cit. pp. 33-4.

(2) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(3) Cocking - op. cit. pp. 108 & 111.

(4) Farabee - Dress among Plains Indian women, p. 240.

(5) D.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

At any rate, almost everyone married at some time or other.(4) The men had to have wives to cook and sew for them; the women on the other hand, depended on the men to provide the raw material for their food and clothing. A woman left without a husband might be independent for a short time, so long as she could rely on her father or brothers for support, but sooner or later she would need a husband. If she did not get one, it was a reflection on her ability, and a state of affairs to be avoided at any cost. The men, for their part, rarely remained single; sometimes, for cowardice in the face of the enemy, they were compelled to don women's clothes, and to refrain from marriage.(5) Under these circumstances, a state of celibacy for a mature person of either sex must have been a matter of reproach, unless, in the case of a man who was too great a warrior to indulge in wedlock.

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(1) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 217.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 211.

(3) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 185.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 293.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 220.

Marriage within the clan was prohibited, otherwise there were no real restrictions.(1) Probably even here, marriage was not absolutely prohibited, for Wissler says it "is not good form, but not criminal. Thus when a proposal for marriage has been made, the relatives of the girl get together and have a talk, their first and chief concern being the question of blood relationship ... and cousins of the first degree are ineligible. Should the contracting parties belong to the same band but be otherwise eligible, the marriage would be confirmed, though with some reluctance, because there is always a suspicion that some close blood relationship may have been overlooked. Thus, while this attitude is not quite consistent, it implies that the fundamental bar to marriage is relation by blood, or true descent, and that common membership in a band is socially undesirable rather than prohibitive. If we may now add our own interpretation, we should say that the close companionship of the members of the band leads to the feeling that all children are in a sense the children of all the adults and that all the children are brothers and sisters and to a natural repugnance to intermarriage."(2) Thompson noted that "no man is allowed connexion with his female relations nearer than his second cousins, and by many these are held too near."(3) Whatever the internal restrictions may have been, the Blackfeet, being a haughty people, frowned upon marriages with outsiders; to this extent the tribe itself tends at present to be endogamous, and probably has always been so, except during the transition period when connections with Europeans resulted in increased prestige or personal advantage.

From one point of view, there were two types of marriage, which we may term, for the sake of brevity, (a) free, and (b) contractual. In the "free" type, marriage was the result of the personal inclination of the two contracting parties; in the second type, it was an agreement arranged, usually, by the parents of the contracting parties. From another standpoint, marriage may be considered according as it took place between persons of importance, in which case it was an elaborate affair, or between persons of humble rank, when it was a very simple matter.

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(1) Curtis - The North American Indian, VI, p. 29.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 211.
Maclean - Social organization of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 251.

(2) Wissler - Social organization, pp. 19 & 20.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 363.

Courtship in the accepted sense was scarcely known among the Blackfeet,(1) that is, it hardly achieved the rank of an institution, although it was widely prevalent. It was a surreptitious affair, which might or might not result in marriage, and might continue after the marriage of either party.(2) For this reason it seems best to discuss it first.

"Young men seldom spoke to young girls who were not relations, and the girls were carefully guarded. They never went out of a lodge after dark, and never went out during the day, except with the mother or some other old woman."(2) Virginity was held, to all appearances, in great esteem; for a girl to become pregnant was regarded as an extreme family disgrace.(3) The youths, on the other hand, were actually encouraged in their efforts to lead girls astray; and if they should succeed in the case of a married woman, they were hailed as persons of promise.(4) Signaling to the paramour with a piece of shiny stone or glass was occasionally employed, but usually one of the following procedures was practised. Wissler believes the aggressor "lies in wait outside the tipi at night or along the paths to the water and wood-gathering places to force his attentions"(3) but creeping under the tipi cover at night seems the more general. This was a favorite method among the Plains Indians and Harmon's account seems sufficiently accurate to quote. And "if his addresses," he writes, "are favourably received, he visits her in the night season, by crawling softly into the tent where she lodges, and where she is expecting him, after the other inhabitants of the lodge are asleep. Here they pass the night, by conversing in a whisper, lest they should be heard by the rest of the family, who all occupy the same apartment. As the morning light approaches, he withdraws in the same silent manner, in which he came. These nocturnal visits are kept up for several nights, or until the young couple think they should be happy, in passing their days together. The girl then proposes the subject to her mother, and she converses with the father in regard to the intended match. If he gives his consent, and the mother agrees with him in opinion, she will direct her daughter to invite her suitor to come and remain with them. It is now only, that they cohabit."(1) "When countenanced by the girl's family attentions may be received by day in full view of all, the couple sitting together muffled in the same blanket."(2) Such a courtship could be, and usually was, perfectly proper, as Harmon has made clear, but if it were not, the girl was held responsible and received all the blame.(3)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 9.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 8.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 9; confirmed by F.

If the case did not progress quickly enough, the young man might visit a shaman and procure some "Cree medicine"(4) from him. He would then be sure to obtain the object of his desires. The same charm and formula would restore a wife's affections if necessary. Likewise a medicine could be obtained to counteract the effect of the love charm used by an unacceptable person.(5)

If it were the girl who wished to open the affair, she might properly do so by making and presenting a pair of mocassins to the man of her choice, thus drawing his attention to her.

It sometimes happened, if there were obstacles in the way, that a young couple took riding horses and a pack-horse and eloped.(6) This enraged the father of the girl so that the young husband had to conciliate him before he could meet him or his own tribesmen again, since it amounted to theft, which must be made good. Sometimes the husband would go to war, steal horses and give them to his father-in-law; sometimes he would send him presents but until the girl was paid for and the disgrace wiped out, he was made to feel uncomfortable in his own clan.(1) "When they returned, they were permitted to live together, or rather, it should be said, they were compelled to do so. Such marriages were regarded as a disgrace to the clan, and were the occasion of slurring remarks from others."(2) "To elope was a disgrace to all parties concerned."(3)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 294.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 8.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 9.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 9.
Wissler - Ceremonial bundles of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 85.

(5) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 190-1.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 215. Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 29.

Of these two variations of this type of courtship, the first was the more frequent. It usually, though not necessarily, resulted in a respectable marriage. Elopement was rarer, resorted to only as a last hope, and regarded as a disgrace by the family and the clan.

The normal marriage was the result of an arrangement, usually between the parents of the contracting parties, but occasionally between the parents of the girl and the prospective son-in-law. Ostensibly, it was the result of a parental solicitude for the girl's welfare; actually it was usually if not always a business proposition, the aim and end of which was to enhance the prestige of the family. And according to the social position of the family, so did the ceremonies vary. It seems advisable to describe first the marriage procedure which prevailed among people of humble rank, since the marriage of important folk was merely an elaboration of the simpler ceremony, amongst the lower ranks.

"Marriages usually took place at the instance of the parents, though often those of the young man were prompted by him. Sometimes the father of the girl, if he desired to have a particular man for a son-in-law, would propose to the father of the latter for the young man as a husband for his daughter."(1) There seems to be no possible doubt that this was the polite form with which to open the subject; Thompson, speaking of the Peigan, relates that "The older women who are related to them are generally the matchmakers"(2) but this evidence has not been borne out. These proposals from the parents were often made "without the knowledge of one or both of the contracting parties."(3)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 215.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 29.

(3) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 13.

Sometimes, however, the arrangements were begun at the suggestion either of the girl or of the man. "If it happened that a young man fell in love with her the proposal came from his parents. This, however, was unusual."(4) Probably it was less unusual for the girl to suggest it. "If the girl had reached marriageable age without having been asked for as a wife, she might tell her mother that she would like to marry a certain young man ... The mother communciates this to the father of the girl, who invites the young man to the lodge to a feast and proposes the match. The young man returns no answer at the time, but going back to his father's lodge, tells him of the offer, and expresses his feeling about it. If he is inclined to accept, the relatives are summoned, and the matter talked over."(5) If the matter was not suggested by the girl, and originated in the mind of a chief or other important person the following procedure was carried out. "He may know of a young man, the son of a chief of another band, who is a brave warrior, of good character, sober-minded, steadfast and trustworthy, who he thinks will make a good husband for his daughter and a good son-in-law. After he has made up his mind about this, he is very likely to call in a few of his close relations, the principal men among them, and state to them his conclusion, so as to get their opinions about it. If nothing is said to change his mind(1) he sends to the father of the boy a messenger(2) to state his own views, and ask how the father feels about the matter.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 211.

(2) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

(3) Wissler - Social organization, p. 9.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 186.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 214.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 214.

"On receiving this word, the boy's father probably calls together his close relations, discusses the matter with them,(1) and if the match is satisfactory, sends back word to that effect."(3)

If the suggestion originated with the girl, and the boy's parents agreed, the young man and his father sent(4) as many horses as they could spare to the girl's father.(5) "The girl, unless her parents are very poor, has her outfit, a saddle horse and pack horse with saddle and pack saddle, parfleches, etc. If the people are very poor, she may have only a riding horse. Her relations get together, and do all in their power to give him a good fitting out, and the father, if he can possibly do so, is sure to pay them back what they have given. If he cannot do so, the things are still presented; for, in the case of a marriage, the relatives on both sides are anxious to do all that they can to give the young people a good start in life."(5)

In the case of "the daughter of well-to-do or wealthy people, she already has many of the things that are needed, but what she may lack is soon supplied. Her mother makes her a new cowskin lodge, complete with new lodge poles, lining, and backrests. A chief's daughter would already have plenty of good clothing, but if the girl lacks anything, it is furnished. Her dress is made of antelope skin white as snow, and perhaps ornamented with two or three hundred elk tushes. Her leggings are of deer skin, heavily beaded and nicely fringed, and often adorned with bells and brass buttons. Her summer blanket or sheet is an elk skin, well tanned, without the hair and with the dew-claws left on. Her moccasins are of deer skin, with parfleche soles and worked with porcupine quills. The marriage takes place as soon as these things can be provided.

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(1) Presumably the discussion concerned degrees of consanguinity. See Wissler - op. cit. p. 19.

(2) A chief according to my informant B.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 211-12.

(4) The messenger chief leads back the horses - B.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 214-15.

"During the days which intervene between the proposal and the marriage, the young woman each day selects the choicest parts of the meat brought to the lodge ... cooks them in the best style, and, either alone, or in company with a young sister, or a young friend, goes over to the lodge where the young man lives, and places the food before him. He eats some of it, little or much, and if he leaves anything, the girl offers it to his mother, who may eat of it. Then the girl takes the dishes and returns to her father's lodge. In this way she provides him with three meals a day, morning, noon, and night, until the marriage takes place. Every one in camp who sees the girl carrying the food in a covered dish to the young man's lodge, knows that a marriage is to take place; and the girl is watched by idle persons as she passes to and fro, so that the task is quite a trying one."(1) Very likely the meat which was thus cooked was brought to the girl's lodge by the young man - the fruits of his hunt, as there "is a belief that the father-in-law was for a time entitled to a part of the spoils of the chase and war, especially the latter."(2)

"During this period it was customary for the father, realizing that his daughter would soon leave his control, to admonish her as to how she should conduct herself after marriage."(3) This is the only instance of which we know where the father took a positive part in the education of the girl. "As the hour of marriage approached, the girl's relatives gave her a forceful talk on her obligations and the shame of adultery. Her attention was called to the important part a virtuous married woman may take in the sun dance as well as her fitness to call upon the sun for aid in times of trial."(2)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 212-13.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 186.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.

(3) McClintock - op. cit. p. 186.

"When the time for the marriage has come, - in other words, when the girl's parents are ready, - the girl, her mother assisting her, packs the new lodge and her own things on the horses and moves out into the middle of the circle - about which all the lodges of the tribe are arranged - and there the new lodge is unpacked and set up. In front of the lodge were tied, let us say, fifteen horses, the girl's dowry given by her father. Very likely, too, the father has sent over to the young man his own war clothing and arms, a lance, a fine shield, a bow and arrows in an otterskin case, his war bonnet, war shirt, and war leggings ornamented with scalps, - his complete equipment. This is set up on a tripod in front of the lodge. The gift of these things is an evidence of the great respect felt by the girl's father for his son-in-law. As soon as the young man has seen the preparations being made for setting up the girl's lodge in the centre of the circle, he sends over to his father-in-law's lodge just twice the number of horses that the girl brought with her....

"As soon as this lodge is set up, and the girl's mother has taken her departure and gone back to her own lodge, the young man, who, until he saw these preparations, had no knowledge of when the marriage was to take place,(1) leaves his father's lodge, and, going over to the newly erected one, enters and takes his place at the back of it. Probably during the day he will order his wife to take down the lodge, and either move away from the camp, or at least move into the circle of lodges; for he will not want to remain with his young wife in the most conspicuous place of the camp. Often, on the same day, he will send for six or eight of his friends, and, after feasting them, will announce his intention of going to war, and will start off on the same night. If he does so and is successful, returning with horses or scalps, or both, he at once, on arrival at the camp, proceeds to his father-in-law's lodge and leaves there everything he has brought back, returning to his own lodge on foot, as poor as he left it."(2)

This account varies slightly from that described by McClintock, who states that, after the mother and daughter had prepared food and moccasins for the young man [a pair of moccasins, by the way, was always given to each of the new husband's male relatives, by the bride, who made them, as a demonstration of her worth to his people(1)], they carried them to his lodge; the girl then entered and simply took her place on his right and distributed the moccasins and food. A feast was then made for the male relatives of the new husband, after which he gave his wife many presents to be distributed among her relations. The girl's mother then made a new lodge, furnishings, a buckskin dress for the girl and buckskin suit trimmed with ermine for her husband. As soon as the tribe moved to new ground, the mother pitched the new lodge with her daughter's assistance.(2) This may not have been a universal ceremony for one statement throws doubt on its general value; the giving of feasts was flatly denied by informants,(3) and is nowhere corroborated, although the distribution of presents was admitted. What McClintock describes was probably the marriage of poor people for the simple "moving-in" ceremony corresponds with Grinnell's account of this type of marriage.(4)

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(1) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 181, speaks as if the wedding day were pre-arranged, which is improbable.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 213-14.

The lodge pitched in the centre of the camp circle as described in Grinnell's account was likely the same as that to which McClintock refers, and which, he says, it was customary for the mother-in-law to replace when the original was worn out.(5) It was expected that a young man would obtain a "lodge decoration" as soon after marriage as he could.(5) McClintock says if he had not obtained one within a year, the father-in-law might purchase one for him. According to informants, the "painted tipi"(6) as it should more properly be called, was obtained four days after the wedding. Its purchase was described thus:

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 8. McClintock - op. cit. p. 186.

(2) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 186-7.

(3) D.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 215.

(5) McClintock - op. cit. p. 187. See Curtis - op. cit., VIII, p. 181.

(6) For a description of painted tipis see McClintock - op. cit. pp. 207-24. Also Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, pp. 220-41.

After his mother had taught his wife how to manage a household (the newly married couple living meanwhile in the lodge of the husband's father), the bridegroom's father went to a man owning a painted tipi, asking him to give it to his son. The man readily consented, and called the youth to him. He also summoned all the old men. When they had entered, the owner painted the boy's face, and sang the songs belonging to the tipi. Everything in the tipi was given to the young man. On the following day the youth's parents removed the tipi and set it up near their own. The couple moved into it and were henceforth "established". The price which must be paid for a painted tipi under these circumstances was four dogs.(1) Naturally, such ostentation was the privilege of the elite of Blackfoot society.(2)

Ordinarily the wife went to live with her husband; at any rate, she was henceforth accounted a member of his clan, unless he, for some reason, preferred to be identified with hers.(3) In most cases the wife merely moved into the tipi of her father-in-law until the couple could afford one of their own.(4) But "If the lodge was too crowded to receive the couple, the young man might make arrangements for space in the lodge of a brother, cousin, or uncle where there was more room. These were all his close relatives, and he was welcome at any of their lodges, and had rights there."(5) It was probably a similar case which Thompson had in mind when he wrote that "On the marriage of the young men, two of them form a tent until they have families, in which also reside the widowed Mothers and Aunts".(6)

The fruits of the chase were, apparently, given to the hunter's father-in-law for a year at least; needless to note, it was impossible to give him all, but the gift was symbolized by the presentation of a choice portion, such as the tongue.(1)

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(1) D.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 181.

(3) Wissler - Social organization, pp. 18-19.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 215. McClintock - op. cit. p. 187.
Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 29; B. and D.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 215.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

The Lot of the Aged

With the declining vigour that comes with advancing age, old Blackfoot men no doubt withdrew more and more from activity. They would be better at the making of weapons, than in the hunt, and would likely be more acceptable as custodians of medicine bundles than as chiefs. And so also with the women. But, whereas old men often increased in honour and respect, the lot of the women must have become increasingly hard. Before such a fate overtook men, she was despised as a useless encumbrance and treated as such. Rarely did she enjoy enough prestige to carry her safely through this trying and pathetic stage of life.

Carver has a very general account of the treatment of the aged by the Plains tribes, and Harmon's is almost identical. No modern statement on the subject seems available but the two accounts mentioned above were read to Blackfeet and their opinions asked concerning them. As might be expected, the answers did not always agree.

However, three informants agreed with Carver and with Harmon that the Blackfeet paid great respect to old age.(2) Evidently, the older an individual, the more respect was paid him, but it is doubtful if the "words of the ancient part of this community are esteemed as oracles." Their words were not considered oracular; but since old people had "power"and were "holy", their utterances could not be disregarded.(3) It is said by way of illustration that before going to war, a young man might ask an old man to smoke his pipe and pray that he have good luck and return with many horses, since the aged had great power in prayer.(3) But for all this, Indians showed unusual amusement upon hearing read the following passage from Harmon: "Should a young man behave disrespectfully towards an old man, the aged will refer him to his hoary head, and demand of him, if he be not ashamed to insult his grey hairs."(1)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10; McClintock - op. cit. p. 188.

(2) Carver - Three years' travels, p. 243; B. D. and E.

(3) D.

In the journal of Lewis and Clark,(2) there is a statement in which it is alleged that among "tribes who subsist by hunting," old people who were unable to follow the movements of the camp were abandoned, with only a small supply of meat and water. This is reported as a fact in the case of "the Sioux, Assiniboines, and the hunting tribes on the Missouri," and "is said to prevail among the Minnetarees, Ahmahawas and Ricarees;" the Blackfeet are not specifically mentioned. Three informants, all relatively young,(3) said that this custom never prevailed among their people, but one old man, certainly eighty years of age or more, asserted that he himself, when a youth, came across an old woman so abandoned. She was in the last stages of starvation and could not move. He made a bag out of a buffalo stomach and filled it with water melted from the snow. Leaving this and a bag of pounded meat with her, he passed on and never saw her after.(4) It was his firm belief that the aged were often left to die in this manner.

The weight of evidence inclines one to believe that the old people claimed and received a good deal of respect and reverence; they may, in extreme cases, have been abandoned to starvation, but such, we believe was rare. Naturally kind-hearted, tribal etiquette compelled the sharing of food in times of scarcity, so that there is some point to the statement that "when once they were short of food, the people all died." Lack of food coupled with difficulties of transportation may have led occasionally to the abandonment of helpless and burdensome members of the clan.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 30.

(2) Lewis & Clark - History of the expedition, pp. 145-6.

(3) B., D. and E.

(4) F.

Death and Burial

So great a horror did the Blackfeet have of a corpse and of death that rather than touch a dead body, a sick person was, if possible at all, dressed before death occurred.(1) He was then asked to make his will.(2) If he died before these preparations had been made, the body was attended to by non-relatives,(2) who were called in for the purpose. Strangers were paid a horse for this service;(3) nowadays half-breeds and Crees are almost the only persons who can be persuaded to assist. Occasionally women performed the duty of dressing the body, since no man dared approach a corpse.(4) This work began immediately after death(5) and not time was lost in disposing of the body. Burial usually took place within a few hours,(6) but in the case of chiefs, the body might be kept for a day or two.(7)

The corpse was dressed, according to Harmon, "gaily".(8) We know that it was dressed in the best clothes the man possessed in life,(9) for as the body was dressed, so would the ghost appear in the Sand Hills.(10) There is a strong probability that a "man was dressed according to his station in life,"(1) i.e., according to the rank he had held in societies. Even his headdress was put on, and all the ornaments and finery he owned.(2) "Chums" and intimate friends removed their earrings and put them on the corpse, apparently to serve as souvenirs in the future life in the Sand Hills.(2) The face was painted;(3) Maximilian says red was the colour used.(4)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.
Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 288; B.

(2) B.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 288.

(4) Bushnell - Burials of the Algonquian, Siouan and Caddoan tribes west of the Mississippi, p. 11, and see also Wissler - op. cit. p. 288; Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.

(7) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 288.

(8) Harmon - op. cit. p. 303.

(9) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.

(10) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287;
McClintock - op. cit. p. 149.

The fully dressed body was then wound in a bison robe(5) (nowadays in a blanket) or in a lodge covering(6) and lashed with rawhide ropes.(7) Thompson confirms the bison robe wrapping;(8) Harmon adds that this covering was never pinned or sewed lest the spirit be confined,(8) which is evidently the accepted belief.(9) Needless to say, coffins were not used in aboriginal times.

It was therefore desirable, if possible, to protect the body in some way from animals. Cremation, attributed to the Assiniboine by Kelsey,(10) seems never to have been practised by the Blackfeet; inhumation was rarely resorted to,(4) because the earth would prevent

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(1) McClintock - op. cit. p. 149.

(2) B.

(3) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31;
Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 288.

(4) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.

(5) Jenness - Indians of Canada, footnote to p. 320;
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10-11.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
Parsons - American Indian life, p. 57.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193 and B.

(8) Thompson - op. cit. p. 341.

(9) Maclean - Mortuary customs of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 21, says the blankets were "strongly tied or sewn together;" B.

(10) Kelsey - The Kelsey papers, p. 12.

Grave house near Gleichen.
(Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesty of the National
Museum of Canada.)

the spirit from escaping to the Sand Hills. Even to-day, this belief is persistent, and graves are very shallow. Failing any other protection, the body was merely left on top of the ground(1) in some lonely spot, such as "a ravine, rocks, or on a high steep bank,"(2) and especially on the top of high hills,(3) and covered lightly with wood and stones(4) or with earth and stones.(3) But, if they "cannot find a solitary spot, the corpse remains above the ground in a kind of wooden shed, and they were often obliged to bury it."(2) The use of the wooden shed mentioned by Maximilian is very interesting; the Crees, we know on the evidence of Mackenzie, used it.(5) Maclean's suggestion that the increasing scarcity of buffalo skin lodges made the wooden shelter acceptable is quite intelligible.(6)

Burial in trees was another form frequently followed.(7) Scaffolds were built in the branches, and on these the body was placed.(8) Sometimes the tipi, in which the death occurred, was left at the foot of the tree.

Lodge-burial was more frequent than tree-burial. Often, the family merely moved out, and sealed the tipi with the corpse remaining inside.

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 341.

(2) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.
Jenness - op. cit. p. 320.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 341.

(5) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxlviii.

(6) Maclean - op. cit. p. 21.

(7) Jenness - op. cit. p. 320.
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
Maclean - op. cit. p. 21.
Parsons - op. cit. p. 57.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 149.
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11, cites Culbertson, to the effect that these people did not use tree burials.

Grinnell says that the lodge, however, was sometimes removed some distance "from the camp, and set up in a patch of bush,"(1) and that the body was left lying on one of the lodge-beds, as if in sleep. This was true only in the case of a chief; they were often thus honoured by having a lodge abandoned to them.(2) Such a lodge, of course, was never entered or used again.(3) According to Grinnell a platform was sometimes erected inside a lodge and the corpse placed on this.(3) The edges of the tipi were weighted down with stones; hence the circles of stones occasionally seen on the open prairie, on high buttes, mark the last resting-place of chiefs.(2) Apparently the more important a chief was the more elaborate was the arrangement of stones. The grave of Little-Medicine-Pipe is quite elaborate. Two concentric circles of stones mark the place of the tipi. Radiating out from the outer circle are seven long lines of stones at regular intervals like the spokes of a wheel. Each line is said to denote some successful expedition of this man. The line running to the east terminates in a rough square of stones, indicating the direction from which the man had originally come. This man's son Crow was similarly buried close to his father. Crow is remembered in tradition as having been the first to bring horses to the Blackfeet. His burial is a few feet north of his father's; it is smaller and lacks the radiating lines. There are numerous similar circles on the same hill-top, which would almost indicate a communal form of burial. Most of the Indians know of the existence of this place, though few have actually visited it.

Women and children were disposed of in the easiest way - merely thrown into the bush or undergrowth,(4) though a few may have been placed on scaffolds.(3)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 149, confirms this, and also
Maclean - op. cit. p. 23.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.

(4) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

The tipi in which a death occurred was abandoned through fear.(1) The soul is said to haunt the spot for some time after death. Even to-day, when the death occurs in a frame house, the tendency is to abandon it, for at least a time. If it is not deserted, the ground where the death occurred is flayed with a lash or whip in order to drive away the spirit and make the place safe for occupancy again.(2) "Should a young child die, the house will be abandoned for a time only."(3)

As the soul lived in the Sand Hills very much as the body lived here, provision had to be made for its future existence. Hence the custom of burying various objects with the corpse. There is great confusion as to what was so buried - some say for example, that weapons were buried;(4) others that they were not:(5) but it seems safe to say that personal belongings such as would likely be needed in the afterlife and those which would be needed to make the journey to the Sand Hills were buried.(6) Indeed this might be extended to include all the belongings which had been used by the deceased in life in any way; even children's toys were buried with them.(5) Harmon mentions, for the Plains tribes in general, "a pipe and tobacco, a dish or small kettle, an awl and sinews to repair his shoes, and a sufficiency of provisions to support him for a few days, until he shall arrive in the land of plenty."(1) Grinnell says his "weapons, and often his medicine, were buried with him. With women a few cooking utensils and implements for tanning robes were placed on the scaffolds."(2) McClintock also mentions "his pipe, saddles, weapons and blankets and the personal articles he valued most."(3) Wissler implies that only such articles as the deceased requested were buried with him.(4) He might, for instance, ask a horse, in which case his favorite mount was shot beside his grave.(4) In former times as many as twenty were thus sacrificed.(2) Once of these was ridden to the Sand Hills.(5) Probably before the horse was known, dogs were killed similarly.(6) In the case of the Crees, who practised inhumation, the articles deposited were placed within the grave;(7) with the Blackfeet, however, they were merely placed beside the body, or on the ground above the grave.(8) We have it on very good evidence that the Crees cut off a lock of the deceased's hair which they kept more or less as a charm;(9) we also know that near relatives cut off their hair as a sign of mourning, both among the Crees(1) and among the Blackfeet.(2) But whether the Blackfeet buried some of their own hair with the corpse, presumably as a souvenir of this life, cannot be confirmed(3) but seems probable.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 30-31.
Maclean - op. cit. p. 22.

(2) B.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.

(4) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 149; confirmed by personal observation.

(5) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

(6) McClintock - op. cit. p. 149.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 304.
In confirmation of this Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxlviii, says, "some domestic utensils were placed" on the grave, but does not mention other personal belongings; yet Skinner - Notes on the Plains Cree, p. 74, says that all their belongings, as with the Blackfeet, were buried.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.

(3) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 149-50.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.
Maclean - op. cit. p. 22.

(5) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.

(7) Hodge- Handbook of American Indians, Part I, p. 361.
Skinner - op. cit. p. 74.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 193.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 149; B.

(9) Harmon - op. cit. p. 303.
Skinner - op. cit. p. 74.
Peeso - The Cree Indians, p. 54.

Other than the deposition of the belongings and the killing of the horses, at the grave, there was nothing that could be called a burial ceremony.(4)

By way of critical comment the following point might be observed. Harmon's statement that "All the Indians east of the Rocky Mountains, bury their dead"(5) is seen to be erroneous. In the same account, Harmon speaks of the grave being lined with the branches of trees; the body deposited and covered with more branches; the grave is then filled in, covered with bark and the ground cleared for ten feet round about.(5) It is evident that he had a Cree burial in mind when he wrote the description, though a few of the details apply to the Blackfeet as well. His statement that stakes were set up on which offerings were hung may also refer to the Cree, but the Blackfeet sometimes would hang the most valuable possessions of an important man on a pole beside his grave as a sort of memorial.(3) This practise seems analogous to the Cree custom of erecting some sort of totem over the grave as described by Mackenzie.(6)

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(1) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxlviii,
Harmon - op. cit. p. 304.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 150.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 287.
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.

(3) B.

(4) Jenness - op. cit. p. 320.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 303. These facts, except the clearing of the ground, are corroborated by Skinner - op. cit. p. 74.

(6) Mackenzie - op. cit. p. cxlviii.

Mourning

Mourning began immediately after a death occurred.(1) The relatives uttered "the most dismal moans and cries,"(2) - probably only the female portion of them, however, for the men were said to be "ashamed to manifest their grief at the loss of anyone."(3) The "great lamentation" over the death of a child witnessed by Cocking was but what one might expect.(4) The neighbours assembled at the house of bereavement,(5) not, unfortunately, out of sympathy, but to carry off what they could lay their hands on.(5) A shaman who lost a patient pilfered all his loose property while in the act of departing.(6) Probably, even the tipi was taken from the family.(7) But one horse was always left,(5) and it seems to have been common to cut off the manes and tails of such animals.(8) In order to increase their discomfort the mourners either cut off a strip around the bottom of the tipi, thereby making it small and inconvenient,(9) or in the case of some, moved into a small and dilapidated lodge.(10)

Occasionally, the bereaved owner of a medicine bundle would attempt to destroy it,(11) but was usually prevented from doing so.(1) Harmon records that the women sometimes threw their medicine bags into the fire in an agony of grief over the loss of child,(2) but such an act was rare indeed among the Blackfeet. They might, however, on rare occasions, burn their herbal remedies.(3)

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(1) Maclean - op. cit. p. 21; B.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 304.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 305.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. p. 102.

(5) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 30.

(7) Parsons - op. cit. p. 57. The statement that all household utensils were given away at death may refer merely to a modern custom. See Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.

(8) McClintock - op. cit. p. 152.

(9) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 150-2.

(10) Wissler - Social organization, p. 32.

(11) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.
Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.

It is noteworthy that the mourner aimed to show his grief, not only by wailing and lamentation, but by making himself wretched in as many ways as possible: - by retirement from social life,(4) by deprivation and by the infliction of physical pain. One of the most typical manifestations of grief was the daily retirement to the hills to mourn.(5) Sunrise and sunset were favorite times for this departure.(6) This procedure was kept up for an indefinite period; in other words, until someone of the mourner's own sex came and persuaded him or her to return to regular camp life.(7) Women seem to have been more addicted to this habit than men. The family of an important chief, however, removed its tipi some distance from the camp, in order to have seclusion to mourn its loss.(8)

There was no prescribed length of time during which mourning was obligatory,(9) although a man was not expected to marry again for a year nor a women for two or three years.(10) Mourning might last from a few months to a year,(1) which was the more usual; but in exceptional cases it varied from a few weeks to as much as twenty years.(2) Owners of medicine bundles were not expected to mourn for more than four days, however.(1) They then took a sweat-bath, re-painted and recovered their bundles. The same regulation probably applied to members of certain societies and to the tobacco priests.(3) Two informants said also that a mother was expected to mourn the mystical four days at the end of which time she received new clothes at the hands of an old man who also painted her face afresh.(4)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit., pp. 246-7.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 305.

(3) B.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 152.
McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfeet, p. 44.

(5) Parsons - op. cit. p. 57.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 287.

(6) McClintock - op. cit. p. 44.

(7) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 150.

(8) McClintock - op. cit., p. 152.

(9) Wissler - Social organization, p. 32.

(10) A and C.

Mourners were expected to affect extreme carelessness of personal appearance. Now only did they leave off all ornaments,(5) but some went so far as to divest "themselves of clothing even in the coldest weather."(6) To leave off leggings and moccasins was almost obligatory.(7) If any clothing were worn at all, it must be old and shabby;(8) and the hair was left unbraided.(9) In ancient times, at least, it seems to have been customary to smear the head and what clothes were retained with white clay.(10)

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(1) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.

(3) A.

(4) A and C.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 288.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 152.

(6) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

(7) McClintock - op. cit., p. 152.

(8) McClintock - op. cit. p. 152; Wissler - Social organization, p. 32; McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfeet, p. 44; Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.

(9) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 32.
McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 152.

(10) Bushnell - op. cit. pp. 10-11.

Mourners gashed their legs(1) with arrow points and knives(2) or, by preference, with a white rock broken for the purpose.(3) Cocking saw the women "scratching their legs with flint."(4) Though Miss Parsons infers that the arms were similarly scarified,(5) and Harmon, speaking of Plains tribes generally, says definitely that incisions were made on both the face and arms, an informant denied that such was the case,(6) and no physical evidence was seen of it amongst living Blackfeet, although many have the legs so mutilated. On the same evidence, we may conclude that the people whom Cocking saw "pricking their Arms, Thighs and Legs" were not Blackfeet, but probably Crees.(7) The technique was to begin at regular intervals along the shin bone, and to made an incision sloping downward on both sides. The piercing of the thigh with an arrow as described by Harmon, is not likely Blackfoot, since these people reserve this form of self-torture as the supreme test of fidelity to the Sun.(6) There may, however, have been some religious significance to the scarification just described, for McClintock says the torture was designed "to excite the pity of the Great Spirit, to display to the tribe their indifferences to pain and to show their high regard for the departed."(8) Women were more addicted to the practice than men, who, however, sometimes scarified their legs for the loss of a son,(2) or for a child who was murdered.(3)

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(1) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.
Jenness - op. cit. p. 320.
Maclean - op. cit. p. 22.

(2) McClintock - op. cit. p. 150.
McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfeet, p. 44.
See Maclean - op. cit. p. 22.

(3) A.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. p. 102.

(5) Parsons - op. cit. p. 57.

(6) B.

(7) Jefferson - Fifty years on the Saskatchewan, p. 53.
Skinner - op. cit. p. 75.

(8) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 150.

Another common form of mutilation was the lopping of the first joint of the little finger.(3) In a man, this was considered a sign of deep grief,(4) such as would come from the loss of a child or wife. Mothers likewise proclaimed their anguish.(2) On the authority of Grinnell, it is said that widows sometimes cut off one or more joints,(5) though this is certainly not the case to-day. The mutilated finger was bound with a white weed till better,(6) or bound to a wooden splint and sprinkled with ashes.(7)

Cutting the hair was also a favourite token of mourning. Women always cut it short,(8) either on a level with the eyes,(9) or just below the ears in the case of widows.(10) Men also cut their hair,(11) though they seldom took off more than a few inches which was regarded as a special act of mourning.(9) Two or three inches was cut

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.

(2) A and C.

(3) Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 150.
Maclean - op. cit. p. 22; B.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 287.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194; Bushnell - op. cit. p. 11.

(6) A and C. The identity of the "weed" could not be ascertained.

(7) Maclean - op. cit. p. 22.

(8) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31; Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.
Parsons - op. cit. p. 57; A.

(9) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 150.

(10) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287; A.

(11) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.
Bushnell - op. cit. p. 10; A.

off and the rest allowed to hang loose.(1) Owners of medicine bundles, tobacco priests and lodge members were not expected to leave their hair loose more than four days. At the end of that time they took a sweat-bath and braided their hair again.(2)

Female mourning might be summarized as follows: - great wailing, cropping of the hair, and leaving it unbraided, the abandonment of all ornaments and of leggings, the scarification of the legs, the retirement to the hills, and the mutilation of the fingers. Some women wore a single bead around the ankle for a time as a sign of mourning.(3) The tenor of Harmon's statement that a bereaved mother pulled out her hair, cut her face, arms and legs and burned her clothes makes one believe he had reference to Cree rather than to the Blackfeet.(4) Mothers were sometimes, if not always, purified in sage-smoke by the leader of a ceremonial.(5)

The customs for men were somewhat different. Besides the usual disregard for personal comfort and the appearance that goes with mourning amongst them, they had a few special traits. They often retired to a small tipi,(6) and formerly wore only a blanket and a breech-cloth,(1) no ornaments of any kind and no leggings(7) or moccasins.(8) Widowers might either attempt to commit suicide, from which they were dissuaded by friends, whereupon they cut off a finger instead,(1) or they might immediately take to the warpath.(2) On a man's losing a son, he would gather together a war party and go to war with the intention of killing as many of the enemy as possible.(3) He might also go off by himself, fully armed, but neither seeking nor avoiding enemies.(4) Anyone crossing his path was in danger of his life, because persons so killed would accompany the departed son to the Sand Hills and would be companions for him. Now that days of war are over, the trait has been modified into a prolonged visit to a distant relative.(4)

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(1) Wissler - Ceremonial bundles, p. 287.

(2) A.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 287.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 305.

(5) McClintock - op. cit. p. 153.

(6) Wissler - - op. cit. p. 32.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 194.

(8) McClintock - op. cit. p. 152.

Memorial ceremonies were apparently personal affairs. It is said that smoke was offered to the spirit of the departed every day, and that occasionally relatives approached the last resting-place and presented the spirit with morsels of food, calling upon it by name.(5)

Characteristic features of Blackfoot mourning customs might be summarized broadly somewhat as follows: bodily mutilation, which took the form of scarification of the legs or the lopping of a joint of the finger; an emphasized disregard of personal appearance; the cropping of the hair and retirement to the hills.

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(1) B.

(2) Jenness - op. cit. p. 320.

(3) A and C.

(4) Wissler - Social organization, p. 31.

(5) B.

CHAPTER III.

-- MATERIAL CULTURE --

Dress and Personal Adornment

Even though there is little superficial similarity in the many descriptions, the Blackfoot manner of dressing does not present an unduly difficult study. Any difficulty there may be arises principally from the varying degrees of completeness of costume, and not from a multiplicity of fundamental styles. The many varieties of ceremonial regalia, however, are more complicated and, being somewhat beyond the scope of this work, have not been described in detail.

First of all, we see that in summer men wore extremely little. Secondly, the winter costume, both for men and for women, followed one single general pattern, which, however, was modified in various ways to accommodate the demands of ceremony. Needless to observe, the skins of animals furnished the sole material for garments, clothing of cloth or vegetable fibre being unknown.

It is hardly credible that the Blackfeet went entirely naked even in summer; Henry's statement that they wore no breech-cloth must be considered in the light of the remainder of the same sentence.(1) It is certainly inconceivable that they should go without moccasins, and most likely they wore the type of breech-cloth commonly met with on the Plains, namely; "a broad strip of cloth drawn up between the legs and passed under the belt both behind and before. There is some reason for believing that even this was introduced by white traders, the more primitive being a small apron of dressed skin."(2) Harmon was familiar with the article, and said that it was about five feet long, looped over a belt, hanging down before and behind.(1) An informant stated that in very hot weather one's moccasins, a breech-cloth and yellow paint on the body were used;(2) the paint, it was believed, was protection from the heat.(3)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - New light on the early history of the Greater Northwest, p. 525.

(2) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 43.
See also Krieger - American Indian costumes, p. 627.
Verrill - The American Indian, p. 302.
Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 196.
Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 119.
Jenness - Indians of Canada, p. 73; D. remarked that breech-cloths were formerly made of buffalo skin.

In ordinary summer weather, it seems safe to say that the Blackfeet were more or less completely clothed.(4) At any rate they had an abundance of raw material and knew how to use it; if they went scantily clad it was from choice. The summer costume was similar to that used in winter, but lighter. Antelope skin was preferred to buffalo.(5) Of it a poncho-like shirt was made. Two entire skins were required to make one garment; "joined by a seam at the top except across the slit for the head ... The back of the body is a duplicate of the front and the sides are open save for two ties, one near the arm pit, the other at the waist. The sleeves are closed,"(6) and usually sewn on; "all the open edges of the body are cut into short broad fringes."(6) Numerous decorations were applied to this base such as weasel- and ermine-tails, quills,(7) and beadwork;(8) Curtis includes the seeds of the silverberry; and we know that elk-teeth have been used in historic times by the Peigans.(8) Henry said that human hair was also used as a trimming on shirts.

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(1) Harmon - A journal of voyages and travels, p. 273.

(2) D.

(3) A. and C.

(4) Maximilian - Travels in the interior of North America, p. 248, states that there was little difference in the mode of dress in the summer or in winter.

(5) D. See also Wissler - op. cit. p. 120; and Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 120. It was probably a shirt of this type that Henry saw (Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 725).

(7) Quills were not used on buffalo skins - D.

(8) Curtis - The North American Indian, VI, p. 153.

Men also wore a pair of leggings supported from the buffalo hide(1) belt by a strap.(2) Harmon was doubtless the first to give an adequate description of these; hence he deserves to be quoted. "The men," he says, "wear tight leggins, each of which is composed of a single piece of leather or cloth, sewed up with a single seam, about an inch from the edge, which projects upon the outside. These garments reach from the ankle to the hip,"(3) "The bottoms are usually cut into four parts and notched or slightly fringed. Bead or quill-worked bands extend almost the full length of the leggings and are bordered by strips of weasel skin or other fringes. As a rule, leggings are painted yellow and striped with black throughout."(4)

The Blackfeet had another garment, the wearing of which has not been stressed, yet seems to have been customary. The skin of an otter, fox, or other small animal was slit in the middle and drawn down over the chest and back.(5) Probably it was made out of a piece of buffalo skin as well.(1) In the passage cited, Wissler suggests that since charms were attached to this, it may not have been regarded strictly as a garment.

A pair of moccasins completed the costume. It was in the making of these alone, it is said, that the Blackfeet used moose-skin.(6) They were, of course, ornamented with bead-work or quill-work, the usual motif having three branches over the instep to signify the three divisions of the tribe.(7) According to Wissler, moccasins were of two general types; one made from a single piece (the older form); and the two- (or more) piece moccasins, which is the present type almost exclusively. The former was without an ankle flap; in the latter, the addition of four to six inches of tanned skin provide this.(1) Summer moccasins were, of course, made of unhaired skin; for winter wear they were often made of buffalo skin with the hair inside.(2) Modern moccasins are usually provided with a raw hide sole.(3) Draw strings are always employed, and trailers, in the form of weasel-tails, or such appendages, are known to have once been common.(4) Women's moccasins, at least among the Canadian Blackfeet, have long ankle flaps reaching well up the leg, in contradistinction to those of the men's which are relatively short. The flaps are held in place, by lacing the draw-strings around them and tying them at the top.

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(1) D.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 122.
Thompson - David Thompson's narrative, p. 350.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 273.
See Orchard - Technique of porcupine quill decoration, plate XI.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 124.

(6) B.

(7) Moccasin designs were always significant - E.

Buffalo robes were worn occasionally at all seasons. Henry mentions them as part of the summer dress, in cases apparently where shirts were not worn.(5) The same author saw Peigans come into his camp "after a 10 or 15 days' march over the plains, in the depth of winter, with the thermometer 30 to 40 degrees below zero, dressed only with shoes, leggings and a robe - nothing else to screen them from the cold."(6) Both sexes used such robes.(7) But precisely how they were worn we may never know. The correct position seems to have been to put the head at the left and the tail at the right.(8) It was thrown about the body, almost to the arm pits, and secured in position much as trade blankets are to-day.(1) Robes were frequently painted in pictographic designs.(1) The proper technique of wearing this garment seems to have been nearly as difficult to acquire as the wearing of the Roman toga, but when mastered was sufficiently arresting in appearance to call for Thompson's praise as expressed in a previous quotation.(2) According to Grinnell robes of beaver were also used in winter, while robes of cowskin or buckskin were preferred for summer.(3) McClintock also mentions the skins of elk and grizzly bears.(4)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 128-9.
D. described this old form, saying that weasel-skin flaps were added for summer wear.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 329; Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525; E.

(3) Moccasin designs were always significant - E.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 130.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 725.

(7) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 123-4.

In general, it may be said that the winter costume was the same as the summer, but heavier. Buffalo skin seems to have been preferred to deer skin for winter garments. Unhaired skin was used for mocassins.(5) Mittens were probably unknown in prehistoric times.(6) Caps of various forms were worn. A strip of buffalo or wolf skin about nine inches broad might be tied around the head;(7) or a cap might be made of the skin of a small animal such as an antelope, wolf, badger or coyote, or even the skin of a large bird.(8) "As the skin from the head of these animals often formed part of the cap, the ears being left on, it made a very odd looking headdress."(9) Probably a feather or two of the chickenhawk, crow, eagle or magpie was worn in the cap because of the "power"(1) which such things might possess. The elaborate feather headdress seems not have been mentioned up to 1821; it is said not to have found favour with the Blackfeet, and may therefore very well not have been seen by the early travellers.(2) Henry's mere mention of feathers as an article of ornament is too ambiguous to be taken to refer to anything more than the occasional use of them.(3)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 123-4.

(2) See page 20 (Thesis) Footnote (5).

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 6.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 725.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 725.
Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 125.
Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 49.
Krieger - op. cit. p. 655.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 525 & 725.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 196.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 6, adds the skins of the otter and the fox.
E. includes beavers; D. adds mink.

(9) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 196.

No corroboration can be found for Cocking's puzzling statement that "Several have on Jackets of Moose leather, six fold, quilted, & without sleeves."(4) Tradition has it that "buckskin shirts of two or more thicknesses were worn as protection against stone and bone points."(5) Yet two informants flatly denied the use of such garments.(6) Moose, they say, is not used for clothing; even their shields are not made of more than one ply of leather; they were naturally without knowledge of "quilting," and the garments they wore had sleeves. It sounds more like a description of a West Coast costume than of a Plains;(7) and is somewhat suggestive of Slave costume.(8) Jenness attributes it to the Assiniboine, without giving his reasons.(9) "War-shirts," however, were used widely by Plains tribes including the Blackfeet.(1) One such shirt of Peigan origin was made "of deerskin, ornamented with short, cut fringe, bands of beadwork, fringe of ermine skin, red feathers and dyed horsehair."(2) According to one informant such shirts were made of buffalo skin; never of moose. They were of the same general type as those described for summer wear, but were perforated with horizontal bands of perpendicular slits in the body and the sleeves; between the rows of slits were rows of small circular holes which were thought to prevent arrows from entering. Fringe of antelope skin was attached to the sleeves, the bottom of the shirt, and the neck opening. This coat would be painted all over with yellow earth, and shells might be used for decoration. Such a garment might be borrowed but not sold; nevertheless, the borrower would have to pay for the use of it.(3)

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(1) D. This would explain the present custom of wearing one or two feathers in modern stetsons.

(2) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 124.

(3) Henry & Thompson, op. cit. p. 525.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 274, mentions the use of feathers worn by Plains Indians at "feasts".

(4) Cocking - Matthew Cocking's journal, p. 111. It seems difficult to believe that Cocking did not have the Blackfeet positively in mind when he wrote this.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 163.

(6) B. and D.

(7) Jenness - op. cit. pp. 330 & 372.

(8) Jenness - op. cit. p. 390.

(9) Jenness - op. cit. p. 310.

The young men among the Peigans, according to Henry, wore distinctive clothes. These were, he says, ornamented with human hair, which had to be obtained from the head of an enemy, and with quill work.(4) The Peigans were not so gawdy in the matter of dress as the young "Slaves;"(5) the latter had to have a powder-horn and shot-pouch slung on their backs, and a gun in their hands.(4) "The bow and quiver of arrows are also slung across the back at all times and seasons, except that, when the Indian is sleeping or setting his tent, those weapons are hung on a pole within reach."(4)

There are, of course, many elaborations of the above costume, to suit the various ceremonies of Blackfoot life. But, since none of these has been described by early writers they will be passed over here. As a general rule, however, garments upon which animal tails formed part of the decoration were for ceremonial use.

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(1) Krieger - op. cit. p. 652.

(2) Krieger - op. cit. p. 653. There is at least one shirt of this type in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto.

(3) D.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 726.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 726 & 731.

Women's dress was a modification of men's. The most usual material may easily have been buffalo skin [Grinnell says cowskin(1)], for ordinary wear; the white and pliant antelope skin which Thompson mentioned(2) was no doubt used by affluent families, or by other individuals for important occasions only. Henry also noted the white "coverings" and believed them to have been cleaned with white clay.(3)

Precisely what was the earliest form of female dress remains doubtful. According to Grinnell, it consisted of "a shirt of cowskin, with long sleeves tied at the wrist, a skirt reaching half-way from the knees to ankles, and leggings tied above the knees, with sometimes a supporting string running from the belt to the leggings."(2) Evidence, both ethnological and historical, however, suggests a fairly uniform type. There is a large measure of uniformity and coherence in the notes by Wissler,(4) Harmon,(5) Thompson,(6) and Maximilian,(7) from which the following description has been composed.

A long tunic reached well below the knees.(8) It was made on the same lines as the man's shirt, only longer; composed usually of two skins. Owing to the length of the garment, it was necessary to insert a third piece with a slit in it for the head - a sort of yoke - across the shoulders. This piece often had fringe of hair on the edges. The two halves of the robe were sewed across the top except at the neck, and up the sides to the arm-holes. The hem of the garment was cut zigzag, with a point at each side and one in the middle and fringed. Across the front of the shirt at intervals were attached double pendant thongs in two or three rows. At each side below the first row of fringe a small cloven hoof-shaped piece of skin was attached, and still lower a triangle and two rectangles, each half black and half red. The yoke bore two horizontal bands of bead-work, the wider being on the front. Below the front band elk teeth were hung. A belt, usually a broad(1) and stiff one,(2) was tied about the waist,(3) and may have been adorned with tassels.(4) The dresses with sleeves mentioned by Maximilian,(5) Harmon,(2) and Grinnell(6) may have been Cree, or types borrowed from them, for the typical Blackfoot costume seems to have been sleeveless.(7)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 196.

(2) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.
Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 49, says two elk skins were used "almost without exception," while Krieger - op. cit., p. 626, claims elk is too thick for use as clothing; the bison is also unsatisfactory.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(4) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, pp. 125-7. This furnishes the basis for the description given.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 275. This probably refers to a Cree type.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(7) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 249.

(8) Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.
Thompson - op. cit. pp. 349-50, says it reaches to the ankle and, Maximilian - op. cit. p. 249, to the feet.

Short leggings, gartered below the knee, were worn with this tunic.(8) The single seam was on the outside of the leg; the beadwork was usually arranged in stripe-effect.(9) The moccasins, with long ankle flaps, were gathered under these and held by laces at the bottom of the leggings.(1)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 128.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 128.
Maximilian - op. cit. p. 249.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 128.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.

(5) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 249.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 196.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 136-7.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 127.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.

(9) Wissler - op. cit. p. 127.

Whether or not women wore caps at all is very doubtful.(2) If Harmon's description(3) refers to the Blackfeet; they wore a piece of cloth two feet square, doubled and sewed up at one end, thus forming an enclosure for the head, and tied under the chin. The bottom fell like a cape to the back where it was fastened to the belt. It was decorated with ribbons, beads and quills. This is somewhat similar to the type which Wissler says was worn with the shirts previously described, covered completely with strips of white weasel skins, and to the top of which a pair of horns was attached.(4) Evidence to support the belief that this was an ancient style is found in the present headgear which consists of a shawl or handkerchief similarly arranged.

Women, like men, wore buffalo robes. But whereas men's robes were often painted with pictograph designs, those of the women were usually ornamented with stripes, frequently transverse.(4) In former times the stripes may have been worked in quills.

A word as to sewing may not be out of place here. Plains Indian women used "an instrument of bone, which they construct themselves."(5) A small tarsal bone from a buffalo or moose may have been the common source of material for making needles,(6) but it is easier to believe that sturdy bird-bones would be more manageable. The thread was, as elsewhere, made from the "broad bands of sinew from the neck or leg of one of the large mammals."(7)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 127.

(2) Farabee - Dress among the Plains Indian women, p. 245.
Krieger - op. cit. p. 655.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 196.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 124.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 275.

(6) E.

(7) Farabee - op. cit. p. 248.

In general, the Blackfeet seem to have presented a more attractive appearance to the first white men than other Plains tribes. Henday, for example, observes that these "natives are drest much the same as others; but more clean & sprightly."(1) The younger Henry, too, notes that the young Siksika " are particular to keep their garments & robes clean"(2) and that, when properly cleaned and trimmed, the dress of the women looked "tolerably well."(3) The same writer in several places remarks upon the conservative tastes of the Peigans in the matter of clothing as compared with those of other Blackfoot tribes. They were "less given to gaudy dress than any other tribe on the plains"(4) and wore fewer "fineries" than the Siksika.(5) This does not mean that any of these tribes dressed simply. Body-painting was not popular among them,(6) but they did paint their clothes and faces; they wore a wide variety of trinkets and paid great attention to the dressing of the hair.

Thompson knew some young men - Peigans at that - who took "full an hour to paint their faces with White, Red, Green, Blue and Yellow, or part of these colours, with their looking glasses, and advising one another, how to lay on the different colours in stripes, circles, dots and other fancies; then stand for part of the day in some place of the camp to be admired by the women. When married, all this painting is at an end, and if they will paint, it (is) only with one colour, as red, or Yellow ochre."(7) Red, indeed, was the favourite colour, and according to Henry, the principal article of their toilet.(2) The only hint we have as to the exact shade of red is to be found in a sentence of Henday's to the effect that it was "like unto English ochre."(1) The backs of the hands, too, were sometimes painted red.(2) In facial painting, no special designs were followed, except for ceremonial dress; to such occasions, the use of stripes, designs and two or more colours were restricted. For ordinary occasions, large circular spots of red on the cheeks, or broad bands on the forehead and chin were popular.(2) The part in women's hair was frequently painted vermillion.(2)

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(1) Henday - York Factory to the Blackfeet country, p. 338.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 726.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 119-20.
Henday - op. cit. p. 339, says that "they do not paint or mark their bodies."

(7) Thompson - op. cit. p. 348.

Most paints were made from earth or rock and were used in a powdered form. To apply them, the skin might first be rubbed with grease or tallow, or the powder might be rubbed on directly.(2) Only one colour was applied on top of another, namely Henry's "ghastly" red paint(3) which is also Wissler's "Seventh Paint."(4) All the colours to be mentioned seem to have been used on the face, on various occasions,(5) with the possible exception of brown, but the preference was for red and yellow, with white frequently mentioned. White earth was the substance used to clean the buckskin suits. Magical power seems to have been attributed to certain of these paints, particularly to one of the yellows.

It is impossible to discuss either the colour range, the composition of the colours, or the derivation of them in an intelligible fashion. In the first place, native concepts of colour do not correspond with our own (green and blue, for example, being apparently interchangeable, if not synonymous terms).(2) In the second instance, different authors probably use different terms to denote the same colour: thirdly, when, for instance, two shades of red are merely mentioned, both made of "mud", it is difficult to trace the history of each independently, not knowing its individual character: fourthly, no systematic, scientific examination of existing samples has ever been made, to our knowledge; until this is done we cannot know their composition: finally, so much secrecy surrounds the production of certain colours, that very little progress can be made in determining it. However, an attempt will be made to shed what light on the subject the data at hand will afford.

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(1) Henday - op. cit. p. 339.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 134.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.
Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

Henry mentions two distinct reds, one inclining to a "Spanish brown"; the other a pale vermillion:(1) while Wissler mentions four or five. I have seen but two, both similar to those mentioned by Henry. One of these is definitely a pale vermillion. It consists, apparently, of crushed rock, and is said to have been brought from the mountains.(2) The value laid on it would incline one to believe it was not a local product. According to informants, it was formerly the privilege of the old to use it, though now all do so.(3) At any rate much secrecy enshrouds its derivation and preparation. The best that can be said is that it was dug out with a knife, applied with a bit of grease, and considered extremely precious.

The "dark red" is presumably the one made by burning yellow earth. This was found along the river banks, dug out, kneaded and burned, whereupon it turned red.(4) Judging from McClintock's account, this variety of red was credited with magical properties and hence held sacred.(5) It was considered to have the power to ward off sickness and was used in adoption ceremonies.(6) No noise might be made in the digging of it which was done by women, or it would turn to mud.(7) Ambiguous statements made by informants referred to a red paint made from

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(2) F.

(3) A. and C.

(4) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 215; Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203; E.

(5) McClintock - op. cit., p. 215.

(6) McClintock - op. cit., pp. 32 & 94.

(7) McClintock - op. cit., p. 216; A. and C.

"earth", but precisely what kind of earth was not clear.(1) Another informant explained that a red paint was prepared by alternating layers of buffalo chips, and a yellow "dirt" powdered fine and mixed with water, and burning the whole.(2) The result was a red or brown.

Yellow ranked second in estimation to red. Henry mentions two shades, a light and a dark.(3) Though Wissler mentions but two shades also, it is possible that there may have been three, because, first of all, there was that made from buffalo galls; secondly, sulphur springs seem to have been the source of another, and a particular earth, burned, the source of a third. There may, however, have been no difference in the last two products. McClintock says that the yellow came mostly from a spot on the Yellowstone River, near warm springs,(4) which inclines one to think it may have been sulphur-impregnated earth. Some also came from the Marias River.(5) On the Blackfoot Reserve in Canada, informants say that even yet they obtain their yellow from the United States.(6) The locally-termed "spring yellow dirt" no doubt refers to the same product, although it seems to be prepared locally as well as imported.(7) According to descriptions it is simply dug out and dried,(7) just as Wissler's "Many-times-baked-paint" was made.(8) Ambiguity surrounds the statements concerning a yellow paint dug from the ground(1) or made by burning clay.(2) That a variety of yellow was prepared from buffalo galls or gall-stones is generally acknowledged.(3) The "spring-yellow-dirt" is credited with magical properties; it was given to the parents of young children so that their offspring might be healthy, for which gift several horses must be returned.(4)

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(1) B. and F.

(2) A. and C.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 216.

(5) McClintock - The Blackfoot tipi, p. 96.
McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 215.

(6) A. and C.
McClintock - The Blackfoot tipi, p. 96.

(7) E.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.

There is little difficulty in identifying Henry's shining "glossy lead colour",(5) "procured on their excursions beyond the Rocky Mountains" which gives "them a ghastly and savage appearance", with Wissler's "Seventh Paint".(6) It was applied over a coat of red.(5) Probably this was the colour which Maximilian had analysed; it was "found to be mixed with an earthy peroxide of iron, probably mixed with some clay."(7) It seems to have been a popular cosmetic, giving an arresting appearance to the user.

Henry also mentions two shades of blue, a dark and light sky-blue.(8) Very little is known about it, except that it was a facial paint.(9) It was made from a dark blue mud;(10) but one informant thought it came from the United states, while another was of the opinion that it was derived from a lake in the north; he thought it was a product of the ducks and that it was dried in the sun, then mixed with water.(1)

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(1) F.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.

(3) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 216.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.
McClintock - The Blackfoot tipi, p. 96; E.

(4) F.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 133-4.

(7) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 247.

(8) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(9) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349; A. and C.

(10) Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.

Green was used as face paint,(2) perhaps only in the Hare Society, the Women's Society and the Chicken Dance.(3) McClintock says it was made from the scum on the surface of a lake north-east of Sweet Pine Hills;(4) but the northern Blackfeet claim that they get it themselves from the north.(5)

Brown, not mentioned in historical documents, is said to have been made by burning clay,(6) which was probably red before firing.(3)

The use of white earth(7) is of very great antiquity among the Blackfeet, forming with red and yellow probably the sole original colours. It was obtained by removing the upper layer of incrustation from dried-up sloughs.(8) No preparation was necessary, and we think Grinnell is in error when he says it was burned before using.(6)

Last in the Blackfoot colour scheme was black. It was, of course, merely charcoal,(9) though there is a suggestion that a black earth was found locally,(5) notably on the Marias River.(10)

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(1) F.

(2) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.
Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(3) A.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 96.
McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 215.

(5) A. and C.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 525 & 731.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.

(9) Wissler - op. cit. p. 133.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 215.

(10) McClintock - op. cit. p. 215.

Grinnell believes it "is doubtful if the women ever took particular care of their hair."(1) Old women certainly do not do so now,(2) and very likely never did. Henry apparently never saw their hair "combed except with their fingers."(3) But, for all that, loose hair seems to have been reserved, except for the old women, for ceremonial occasions.(4) It seems fairly safe to say that it was customary for young Blackfoot women to give some attention to their hair, parting it in the middle, clear to the back of the neck, and carefully smoothing it down over the ears.(4) Sometimes a band confined it about the head; at other times it was caught in two braids.(4) The ends of such braids were never, it appears, tied at the back as now.(5) The custom of fastening it in "large knots over the ears" is traceable to the Cree.(6) According to Henry red earth was always smeared over their hair,(3) but Wissler is of the opinion that paint was seldom so used.(4)

On the whole, men gave their hair more attention than did the women.(7) Young men "allow theirs to flow loose and lank about their necks, taking great care to keep it smooth about the face."(3) In such cases it was likely parted in the centre.(8) Many men cut their hair short and dressed it to stand on end.(7) Others wore it in "a long thick queue behind."(9) Nowadays there are three such queues, the centre one of which falls behind; the other two hang over the shoulders.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 130.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 130.

(5) A. and C.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 153.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 276.
Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 515.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 130-1.

(8) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 153.

(9) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 247; A. and C.

The owners of medicine pipe bundles were obliged, when the purchase was made, to cease cutting the hair.(1) The several queues were bound "together with a leather strap, in a knob over the forehead,"(2) which henceforth was painted red, but never combed.(1) Such a knob attained in time, a height of seven or eight inches.(3) When for any reason, the bundle was transferred to another owner, the knob was cut off, and the three queues were resumed.(1) Henry observed young men who also wore a "lock hanging down over the forehead to the tip of the nose, there cut square, and kept smooth and flat, as if to hide the nose,"(3) a strange custom upon which no light can now be thrown.

All men were eager to have an abundant crop of luxuriant hair; the means they took of getting it was to anoint it profusely with grease, "which gives it a smooth and glossy appearance."(4) Back-fat seems to have been the favourite ointment.(5) Neither paint nor ornaments were much used, since only objects of magical value were supposed to be inserted in the hair.(6) As among other tribes, face-hair was disliked and was usually pulled out, probably with bone or wooden tweezers.(7)

Without discussing amulets, which are not strictly ornaments, a few additional remarks on personal adornment may be made. Fillets of sweet-grass were worn around the head by the women.(8) Earrings were seldom worn by either sex;(8) although it is a universal custom now. Such as were used may have been made of bone, wood, or shell.(9)

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(1) A. and C.

(2) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 47.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 525.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 131.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 274.

(5) A.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 132.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 131.

(8) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(9) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197.

The latter article was no doubt introduced by traders, as were "Beads of various colours, Rings, Hawks Bells, and Thimbles;"(1) since the cowrie shell so much admired today is not of local origin. The wearing of nose-rings was never even considered.(1) Maximilian wrote that a small shell was sometimes suspended over the temple and that small locks of hair were wrapped with brass wire and allowed to hang at each side of the forehead.(2) The Peigans, and of course others, wore necklaces of bears' claws,(3) and probably of badgers' claws as well;(4) a necklace made of large irregular lumps of a white fungus, strung on a piece of skin,(5) was highly prized by men. It has a decidedly agreeable odour, and was often used as a perfume. It may be derived from the north, probably from the Carrier country, where it is said to grow on trees, near the ground.(6) Since it is definitely a fungus, we believe the "minoique root" which the Peigans had "in great abundance" to be an entirely different substance. Informants had knowledge of a sweet-smelling root which they say comes, like Henry's "minoique",(1) from the south, and which like it was used mixed with tobacco for smoking, since it was a sure cure for headaches, but they denied this was used for necklaces.(7) The inference is that Henry saw both substances but confused their uses somewhat.

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(2) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 247.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 132.
D. claimed bears' claws were worn only by owners of the "Bear Knife."

(4) D.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 132.

(6) F.

(7) Judging from McClintock's materia medica, (McClintock - op. cit. p. 526), this plant may have been the American White Hellebore. (*Veratrum speciosum*). B. and D.

Looking west from the Old Sun School, Gleichen, 1935. (Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

Bracelets were made of deers' teeth.(1) Elk teeth were an applied ornament on women's dresses.(2) Young Peigans decorated their dresses with a good deal of quill work and fringe of human hair, which had to be obtained from the head of an enemy.(3)

The Food Quest and the Preparation of Food

So many excellent descriptions of the methods employed by the Blackfeet to hunt the bison exist that it would be superfluous to repeat them here.(4) Nevertheless, since the bison was the focus around which the entire culture of these people revolved, they must be described, however briefly.

Two distinct techniques were employed, the use of which was dictated by circumstance. Broadly speaking, bison might be taken either by a single hunter or in a communal drive.

Hunting by a single individual was chiefly resorted to in times of threatened famine, or when the food supply of the camp was not imperilled by such procedure. To attempt to kill single-handed a few bison from a herd upon which an encampment depended was one of the most serious public offences it was possible to commit; it would certainly result in the departure of the herd, and the consequent danger of starvation to the community. "Thus, a man found running buffalo or riding about outside without orders might have his clothes torn off, be deprived of his arms, his horse's ears and tail cropped."(5) If circumstances demanded it, however, a man might rightfully chase them on snowshoes, which was an easy matter as the bison cannot travel quickly over snow, or by stalking.(1) Creeping stealthily up to the animal, usually under the disguise of a wolf-skin, the hunter shot them with bow and arrow.(2) And, of course, after the advent of horses, the animals were sometimes hunted by single mounted men; it is said that the horses took as keen delight in this sport as their riders.(3) In this case, bow and arrow were preferred to guns because they were more easily handled.(4)

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 349.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 197. Only Sun Dance Women might wear necklaces or bracelets of elk teeth; D.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 525 & 726. This fringe was probably not worn by all. To obtain the hair for it, a young man had to ask an old warrior for it, who would thereupon give it to him, though a generous payment was expected in return; D.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 47-51.
Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 227-35.

(5) Wissler - Social organization, p. 26.
Thompson - op. cit. p. 358.

The communal form of hunting buffalo also had variants. The most important and most favoured was that of impounding; the surround was not used as extensively. Being the less important, the latter method will be described first. A herd, usually a small one, was surrounded by men on foot(5) or mounted, under the direction of a leader.(6) They "rode around and around a herd bunching them up and shooting down the animals one by one."(7) A slightly different procedure was to surround a herd on foot, pitch the tipis in a circle around them, then frighten the animals so that they began to mill about within the enclosure until they were exhausted. It was then an easy matter to dispatch them.(8) Surrounding was not considered especially dangerous.(9)

Firing the prairie grass, and so either trapping a herd or compelling it to move in some desired direction, was an ancient method, though not a popular one amongst the Blackfeet. They argue that the smell of the smoke frightened the bison into abandoning the country.(1) They must have used it on occasion, however.(2)

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(1) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, pp. 47-8.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 235.

(3) D.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 285.

(5) A. and C. See also Kelsey - The Kelsey Papers, p. 13, for the Assiniboine method.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 50.
See Denig - Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri, p. 531.

(7) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 22.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 234.

(9) A. and C.

In the method of impounding, the technique was to lure, or drive, the herd into a lane, at the end of which was a deep and steep drop, often into an artificial enclosure. This trap might be a very simple affair, or a fairly elaborate one. The younger Henry relates that the Peigan used a simple form of trap,(3) corral, pound, or as the French called them "parcs". A description of the two general types will enable the reader to interpret the accounts of the early observers.

In the simple form used by the Peigan, the point consisted merely of two converging lines of stones, stakes, buffalo chips, or even of people. The open end of this lane extended out into the Plains for as much as two miles.(4) At the small end of the lane, the line-walls abutted on a bluff or cliff where the drop to the level below was about eight or ten feet. At the bottom, a circular enclosure or pound might be constructed of tree-trunks, but usually this was unnecessary, as the animals were killed or maimed by the fall.(2)

The elaborated type with an artifical corral was distinctive of the Blackfoot tribe, the Plains Cree and the Assiniboine.(5) The latter, according to Henry, were "the most expert and the most dexterous nation of the plains in constructing pounds, and in driving buffalo into them."(6) Cocking was probably the first to describe the structures and his account of those of the Blackfeet is quite accurate though not very full.(1) According to him, these "Archithinue natives" were highly skilful "at pounding." The younger Henry's description of an Assiniboine specimen is about as concise as can be expected. "The pounds are of different dimensions, according to the number of tents in one camp. The common size is from 60 to 100 paces or yards in circumference, and about 5 feet in height.(2) Trees are cut down, laid upon one another, and interwoven with branches and green twigs; small openings are left to admit the dogs to feed upon the carcasses of the bulls, which are generally left as useless. This enclosure is commonly made between two hummocks, on the declivity or at the foot of rising ground.(1) The entrance is about ten paces wide, and always fronts the plains.(3) On each side of this entrance commences a thick range of fascines, the two ranges spreading asunder as they extend, to the distance of 100 yards, beyond which openings are left at intervals; but the fascines soon become more thickly planted, and continue to spread apart to the right and left, until each range has been extended about 300 yards from the pound. The labour is then diminished by only placing at intervals three or four cross-sticks, in imitation of a dog or other animal (sometimes called "dead men"); these extend on the plains for about two miles, and double rows of them are planted in several other directions to a still greater distance."(4) This description closely agrees with Harmon's,(5) except that the latter adds that the walls diverge at an angle of ninety degrees, and that the posts are about four feet above the ground and forty feet apart, with a wisp of hay or some buffalo chips on the top of each. "Indians are stationed by the side of some of these stakes to keep them in motion, so that the buffaloes suppose them all to be human beings."(1) Sometimes, instead of deceiving the bison thus, piles of stones were used; when these were large enough human beings hid behind them until the critical moment. As for the corral, informants added that poles sharpened at one end were left protruding into the interior, their ends fastened into the ground without, so as to form a protection for the fence.(2) Moreover, they claimed that the descent or drop, if it was not too steep to prevent the entrapped bison from climbing back up, was faced with tree trunks laid horizontally across its surface and lashed with rawhide. Up this the buffalo could not return.

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(1) B. and F. The employment of this method was emphatically denied by these informants.

(2) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 51.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 725. The author infers that they were too indolent to make elaborate ones.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 35.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 38 & 50.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 518.

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(1) Cocking - op. cit. p. 109.

(2) Cocking - op. cit. p. 109, says seven feet high and 100 yards in circumference.

(3) It does not invariably face the Plains.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 518. See Lowie - The Assiniboine, p. 10, and note the similarity.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 286.

The Siksika, it is said, living in a more level country than the Peigans, were obliged to construct an inclined slope, which on the far side, dropped abruptly to the level of the Plains again, within the corral. "The causeway was fenced on either side by logs, so that the buffalo could not run off it ... When it (the corral) was full, or all had entered, Indians, who had lain hidden near by, ran upon the bridge, and placed poles, prepared beforehand, across the opening through which the animals had entered, and over these poles hung robes, so as entirely to close the opening."(3)

If buffalo were scarce, or failed to come near, resort would be had to the owners of beaver bundles to bring them within range. For this purpose, a somewhat elaborate ceremony, centering around the "iniskim" or "buffalo-rocks"(4) was thereupon performed by the shaman, and in which the people participated. Then next morning the buffalo would be certain to appear. There was, however, no erection of an offering pole in the centre of a Blackfoot pound as there was in the case of the Assiniboine(1) and no smoking in the lodge of the chief.(2)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 286.

(2) D. & E.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 231.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 126, identifies these as Ammonites or Baculites.

A sentinel was posted to watch for herds; he might either reconnoitre the adjacent territory on horseback, or scan the plains from the camp or some nearby eminence. Scouts of this sort may have had some such special rank as chief of the hunt, since they seem to have "ordered all the young, or able-bodied men, out to the lines where they took their stations behind the rock piles, concealing themselves under blankets or newly cut branches."(3) Once a herd was detected, it had to be decoyed within the lane in order to be driven to its destruction. After horses became plentiful, they could be, and were, used to drive the bison headlong down the lane. But before they were to be had, the animals had, of necessity, to be lured in. To accomplish this required a great skill, and a man successful at it was naturally held in great esteem.(4) Usually a young man,(5) a swift runner, covered himself with a buffalo robe, with the hair out, and, walking or creeping in front of the herd, aroused their curiosity and enticed them to follow him. He led them down the lane, jumped over the drop and out through a hole in the wall of the corral. On Denig's evidence, the same technique on horseback might reasonably be expected among the Blackfeet though it is not reported for them.(6) But when horses became common, the old method of decoying would be rendered superfluous, and hence fall into disuse, and deliberate chasing of the animals became the custom.(1)

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(1) Denig - op. cit. pp. 532-3.
Franklin - Narrative of a journey to the shores of the Polar Seas in the years 1819-20, 21-22, I, p. 176.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 229.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. pp. 286-7. This presumably refers to a Cree Custom.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 37; and corroborated by A.

(4) E. and F.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 229, states that the possessor of the beaver bundle who had been invoked the night before was the one who lured in the animals.

(5) This man is said to have drunk a decoction of saskatoon juice previous to setting out - E.

(6) Denig - op. cit. p. 533.

Once well within the lane, the men, women and children lining the walls began to shout and gesticulate, frightening the buffalo still more. The leaders followed the decoy to the drop, and were then forced to take the leap by the pressure from behind. When one went over, the rest followed blindly. Many were killed or crippled by the fall; the survivors finding themselves trapped, began to mill around. Harmon would have us believe that they instinctively began to circle "in the direction of the apparent revolution of the sun, from east to west,"(1) but an informant considered this statement absurd; he explained that since it was easier to shoot the animals if they were all moving in one direction, they were therefore started moving thus, but it did not matter whether they moved from east to west, or vice versa, and indeed, no attention whatever was paid to the point.(2) Since the buffalo rarely charged a barrier, no matter how frail, the light walls of the pound served adequately. Women and children, however, were posted at any holes to frighten back stray animals.(3) Bows and arrows were preferred for the work of slaughter;(4) guns were only employed in case the bison broke through.(5) Probably the Blackfeet marked their arrows as Henry says the Assiniboine did theirs,(6) thus making it easy to identify the animals one killed.(7)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. pp. 285-6.

(2) B.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 519.

(4) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.
Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 285.

(5) Lowie - op. cit. p. 10.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 520.

(7) This was the opinion of B. See Lowie - op. cit. p. 10.
This description is based chiefly on Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 518-20.

Butchering was primarily a man's job, though if the drive took place near the camp, the women might assist in the work under the direction of the men.(1) Within historic times, of course, metal knives have been the implements used, but it is almost certain that their cutting tools were of stone in prehistoric times.

Wissler notes that "occasionally in recent times, butchering was, by necessity, done with stone flakes,"(2) and the writer was shown a stone knife about five inches long which was said to have been the type used for the purpose.(3)

According as the animal was killed near or at a distance from the camp, "light" or "heavy" butchering was practised.(2) The essential difference was that in "light" butchering, the meat was cut away, so as to leave the bones behind and thus make tranportation easier.(2)

Harmon has left an account of how a carcass was cut up by the tribes he knew. According to him, it was divided into eleven pieces,(4) but Wissler gives a much larger number.(5) Informants mentioned five cuts for a cow and six for a bull.(6) In each case they speak of the four quarters and the ribs, but back-fat was only mentioned in the case of the bulls. At any rate, the animal was first cut down the median line of the breast and flayed by working the skin back from this.(1) The carcass was cut up while resting on the hide. There is, from here on, a close correspondence in the accounts of Wissler, Harmon and informants, though the former's is by far the most detailed. Judging from Wissler's description,(5) the carcass was first quartered, the breast and abdomen were cut in one piece, the short ribs in two pieces, the neck or long ribs in two pieces, the loin, the hump, the backbone in two pieces; the rump, the neck, and the back-fat (probably Harmon's "two sinews on each side of the back-bone"). The heart, tongue, brain, paunch and small intestines, and sometimes the hoofs and meat from the head, were taken. The marrow from the leg-bones was usually eaten during the butchering. Harmon also mentions the liver, and we know that very little meat of any kind was left unused. If the meat was to be transported it was loaded on the horse, fastened in the hide as described by Wissler.(1)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 41.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 42.

(3) E. and F.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 287.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 41-2.

(6) A. and C.

Harmon believes that the tongues were all taken to the tent of the chief, who made a public feast of a portion of them and gave the remainder to his fellow-tribesmen.(2) The meat and skins were distributed among the whole camp.(2) This description most likely has reference to the Assiniboine,(3) because the Blackfoot chieftain did not claim all the tongues, like his Assiniboine counterpart; on the contrary, tongues were given to the women who undertook to erect the Sun lodge the next summer.(4) However, he had the privilege of pointing out what spoils each hunter might have.(4)

Methods of buffalo hunting varied according to the season. In summer, stalking, the surround, and shooting from horseback were favoured; in winter, impounding seems to have been the almost exclusive method, for the chasing of one or a few animals through the snow, or over the ice was an exceptional event.(5)

Impounding is probably an adaptation of the deer-trapping methods so extensively used by Algonquian peoples. In such a case the Cree would seem to be the tribe which first brought it to the Plains.(6) On the other hand, the proficiency of the Assiniboine in the use of the method argues that they may have originated it.(1) Grass-firing seems to have been in favour farther east, while the surround is considered a post-equine development.(2) In the point of antiquity, the drive and grass-firing methods seem to have the better of the surround.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 42.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 287.

(3) Denig - op. cit. p. 534.

(4) B.

(5) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 22.
Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, pp. 48-9.
Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22.

Needless to say, Henry thought the Blackfeet "not nice or clean in their cooking."(3) But on the other hand, Cocking considered they to be "much more cleanly in their cloathing & food than"(4) the Assiniboine. At least they, unlike the Assiniboine, have never been accused of eating insects,(5) nor did they eat such creatures as frogs, turtles, lizards, snakes, grasshoppers nor worms. Meals, of course, were irregular: "all day meat of some kind" was on the fire,(3) as at present. The peculiar eating customs mentioned by Henry were not characteristic of Blackfoot culture, but seem to have partaken solely of the nature of personal taboos: as such they can be readily explained.(6)

"The Plains Indians were meat-eaters from long habit, and so fixed had that habit become that all other eatables had, to them, lost the character of food."(7) In general, this statement is true, for the Blackfeet like other Plains tribes, depended in the last analysis upon the bison for their food supply. Though large quantities of other foods, both animal and vegetable, were consumed, their significance was negligible compared with the buffalo. Indeed so accustomed have these people become to this type of food that even to-day many individuals will eat scarcely anything but meat. Umfreville summed up their fare very concisely when he wrote that their "chief subsistence is the flesh of the buffaloes, the deer species, and likewise vegetables.(1)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 49.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 50.
Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 22.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(5) Lowie - op. cit. p. 12; Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 727.

(7) Jefferson - Fifty years on the Saskatchewan, p. 65.

Though the bison was the mainstay, it is extremely probable that all other animals contributed to the food supply at times. It is true that the flesh of certain species was not relished, but in times of stress it is difficult to believe that even they were not utilized to relieve an empty stomach. Larger game, such as that found in the mountains,(2) and antelope,(3) elk and deer(4) naturally ranked second in importance to the bison. Rabbits were an important supplementary diet and ducks and geese may also have been relished.(5) Duck eggs at least were a favourite food.(6) The beaver may have been eaten;(7) McClintock says its tail was a delicacy,(8) but one man asserted that since the beaver's flesh is like ours it was never eaten.(9) Apparently the eating of skunks, badgers, prairie dogs, wolves and coyotes was looked upon with revulsion.(8) The bear was usually considered too sacred to eat,(10) and the otter likewise.(7)

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(1) Umfreville - Present state of Hudson's Bay, p. 201.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 153.

(3) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 153; B.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205.

(5) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 238; B.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.
Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 26.

(7) B.

(8) McClintock - op. cit. p. 238.

(9) D. The inference seems to be that man and beaver are mystically akin, probably because of the latter's religious significance.

(10) Wissler - op. cit. p. 20.

Notwithstanding the denials by McClintock,(1) Grinnell(2) and Wissler,(3) of the existence of the custom, there is evidence to show that the eating of dogs was not unknown among the Blackfeet. The ceremony, described by Harmon(4) for the initiation of conjurers and midwives, in which a dog is boiled and eaten, was considered by an informant to refer to a Cree custom.(5) He explained, however, that the Blackfeet did occasionally hang a pup at sunrise, cut off the head, skin the body and boil the flesh. This was eaten by the old men, the uneaten portion being distributed to the guests. Such a ceremony is a rite of the Dog Society. Another informant said pups were only eaten at the Sioux Dance,(6) probably the "intrusive society of the Hair-parters."(3) The first informant said that dogs were eaten also as a change from buffalo meat; the second that they were resorted to when "hard up", in addition to the dance-ceremonial. Another informant declared that "not even the Crazy Dogs would eat dog" and implied it was a reprehensible Cree custom.(7) The age-old hatred of all things Cree may account for the reluctance to admit the existence of the custom amongst themselves; at any rate, it is readily admitted by some and as vehemently denied by others. But where there is smoke there is fire, and I believe dog-eating to be more firmly established than is generally supposed.

Little or no meat was wasted, except "the lungs, gall and one or two other organs."(8) The ribs were considered the best, but the old people preferred the tongue.(1) "The paunch of a male buffaloe when well cooked" was considered to be "very delicious food,"(2) though Grinnell said it was preferred raw.(3) The liver was also eaten raw(4) and probably the kidney as well.(4) A favourite delicacy was the small intestine, stuffed with meat and roasted.(5)

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(1) McClintock - op. cit. p. 238.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 20-1.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 325.

(5) B.

(6) F. This man agreed in the main with the first account collected, though he was unaware that any other information on the subject was possessed.

(7) D.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205.

Harmon relates that the "Indians, in general, like to have their food, whether boiled or roasted, thoroughly done; but those who inhabit the plains frequently make their meals without the aid of fire."(2) According to Grinnell, the Blackfeet, at least liked to have roasted foods thoroughly done; boiled meats on the other hand, were merely heated through, being left but five minutes in the water.(6)

Roasting and boiling were the principal means of cooking foods,(7) the latter being the favourite method.(8) But roasting, since it was the older historically, may well be treated first. The simplest method of roasting was that described by Harmon, and said by him to be in general use on the Plains. "Those Indians," he writes, "who have only bark kettles, generally roast their meat. This they do, by fixing one end of a stick, that is sharpened at both ends, into the ground, at a little distance from the fire, with its top, on which the meat is fixed, inclining towards the fire. On this stick, the meat is occasionally turned, when one part becomes sufficiently roasted."(2) Henry saw the same method employed by the Peigans.(1) Ribs seemed to be the favourite cuts for this treatment,(2) though by no means the only one.

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(1) D.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 279.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205; F.

(4) F.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205. An informant said his people preferred their food half-cooked.

(7) Harmon - op. cit. p. 279.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

A variant of the roasting technique was often employed at the time of the buffalo drive for the cooking of foetal and new-born calves. A hole was dug, the bottom covered with hot stones, and over these spread a layer of willow branches and grass. The calves were placed on this, covered with branches, grass and earth and left until the next day. A similar method was to dig a hole about 30 inches deep, and line it as before.(3) In this case, however, the dressed claves were wrapped in fresh hides placed on the stones and water poured in. The hole was covered with two more fresh hides, the upper one stretched and staked. Earth was heaped over this and a fire built on top.(3)

Boiling might be done either in pots or in green hides. Cocking was the first to notice that the Blackfeet employed pots, "in which they dress their victuals."(4) It is not known how the pot was subjected to the fire, but probably it was held over it on the end of a crooked stick, or on a tripod, as in historical times.(5) A green hide might be laid in a hole in the ground, and pegged down. Water was then heated by means of hot stones thrown in.(6) Such a method was employed when pots were not handy, when men were on the warpath or otherwise away from camp, and when the favourite blood-soup was to be made.(5)

The eggs of waterfowl, and particularly duck eggs, were a favourite food. The usual method of cooking them was to dig a hole and put in it some water. "At short intervals above the water, platforms of sticks were built, on which the eggs were laid. A smaller hole was dug at one side of the large hole, slanting into the bottom of it. When all was ready, the top of the larger hole was covered with mud, laid upon cross sticks and red-hot stones were dropped into the slant, when they rolled down into the water, heating it and so cooking the eggs by steam."(1) We know that wild ducks and geese are at present eaten when obtainable,(2) but no information as to the method of cooking is at hand.

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 25. A., C. and G.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 25-6.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. pp. 108 & 111; A. and C.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 205.

"... The Blackfoot, in particular, loathed fish-eaters, for fish to them was 'unclean', as snakes are to most people."(3) Such, indeed, seems to have been very true in ancient times. Two early writers, Henday(4) and Umfreville,(5) state specifically that the Blackfeet never ate fish. The general repugnance to fish-eating may have been overcome somewhat in Henry's time, for his statement that "some never taste wild fowl or fish"(6) must be classed with the other personal taboos mentioned in the same list. There is a clan of Bloods called the Fish-eaters who are said to be very fond of fish;(7) in fact, the Bloods in general may have had no aversion to it as a food. We know, too, that the northern Stonies subsisted partly on fish.(8) But, for all that, fish cannot be said to have been a popular article of diet among the Blackfeet.(1) When used, the fish is said to have been opened "and cooked over the fire".(2)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 26; A. and C.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 21.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 238; D.

(3) Barbeau - The Indians of the Plains and Rockies, p. 199.

(4) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.

(5) Umfreville - op. cit. p. 201. It may be that the Siksika are meant here and not the three kindred tribes.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 728.

(7) B.

(8) Lowie - op. cit. p. 12.

Soup was an indispensible item of their diet.(3) The least esteemed variety was that made by boiling bones after all the meat had been taken off; it was considered fit for old women only.(4) The rump made the most highly esteemed soup; but the head, cut and pounded to pieces, the bones, or dried stomach could also be used.(5) Sometimes pounded chokecherries were used as a flavouring.(6) Probably the most indispensible variety was that made of blood. The best blood soup seems to have been made in a fresh paunch or hide with hot stones.(7)

Harmon's note(8) to the effect that when a buffalo was killed his blood was drunk raw and the water in his stomach used as a beverage seems not to refer to the Blackfeet, although one man admitted that the first was occasionally done.(5) Likewise, Harmon's "broth of flesh or fish", was not the "ordinary drink"(9) of the Blackfeet. Soup was admittedly the mainstay, but it was never made either of meat or of fish.(10)

The term "pemmican" has been used rather loosely to designate dried meat packed in bags. Actually the term ought to be restricted when used in connection with the Blackfeet to a product made as follows. The choicest cuts of bison meat (or of deer or elk)(1) such as the hams, loin, shoulders and other lean parts were sliced into large, thin sheets and hung to dry, either in the sun or over the fire within the lodge. Grinnell describes the process thus: "When the time came for making the pemmican, two large fires were built of dry quaking aspen wood, and these were allowed to burn down to red coals. The old women brought the dried meat to these fires, and the sheets of meat were thrown on the coals of one of them, allowed to heat through, turned to keep them from burning, and then thrown on the flesh side of a dry hide, that lay on the ground near by. After a time, the roasting of this dried meat caused a smoke to rise from the fire in use, which gave the meat a bitter taste, if cooked in it. They then turned to the other fire, and used that until the first one had burned clear again. After enough of the roasted meat had been thrown on the hide, it was flailed out with sticks, and being very brittle was easily broken up, and made small. It was constantly stirred and pounded until it was all fine. Meantime, the tallow of the buffalo had been melted in a large kettle, and the pemmican bags prepared. These were made of bull's hide, and were in two pieces, cut oblong, and with the corners rounded off. Two such pieces sewed together make a bag which would hold one hundred pounds. The pounded meat and tallow - the latter just beginning to cool - were put in a trough made of bull's hide, a wooden spade being used to stir the mixture. After it was thoroughly mixed, it was shovelled into one of the sacks, held open, and rammed down and packed tight with a big stick, every effort being made to expel all the air. When the bag was full and packed as tight as possible, it was sewn up. It was then put on the ground, and the women jumped on it to make it still more tight and solid. It was then laid away in the sun to cool and dry. It usually took the meat of two cows to made a bag of one hundred pounds; a very large bull might make a sack of from eighty to one hundred pounds."(2)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 20.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.

(2) F.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

(4) G.

(5) F.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 27.

(8) Harmon - op. cit. p. 279.

(9) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282.

(10) B. and F. The first informant says the custom is Cree.

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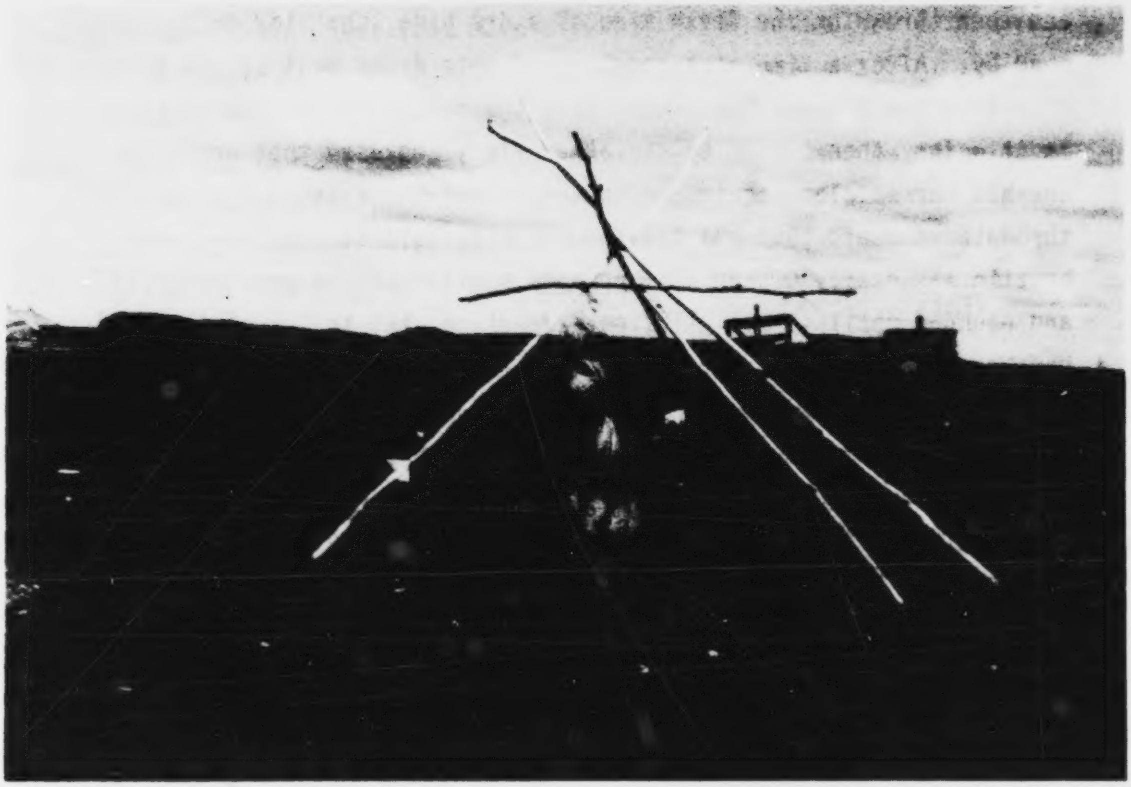
(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 23.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 206-7.



Meat drying rock. (Photo by Kenneth Kidd; courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

The slicing and drying process is also described by McClintock,(1) Hamilton,(2) Harmon,(3) and an informant.(4) The toasting process is described only by Grinnell. In most cases, flat stones usually served for a mortar,(2) with a stone pestle. The maul type of pestle was no doubt the ordinary one.(5) More often than not, marrow fat obtained by boiling cracked bones and skimming off the grease, and the best of the tallow were mixed together. When the pemmican was packed it was alternated with layers of this marrow-tallow mixture. A few leaves of peppermint were added to suit the taste.(6)

Contrary to Wissler's definition, informants did not consider pemmican to be "a compound of berries and flesh."(5) Such a preparation they call "saksi-sakima."(4) To make it, wild cherries were pounded and mixed with the dried meat.(5) Sometimes strips of the "shredded meat" were also added, and the whole again dried and stored in parfleche bags.(7) Pemmican might be eaten dry or stewed in water.(8)

"Depouille" is somewhat similar to pemmican. "It is a fat substance," to quote Hamilton "that lies along the backbone, next to the hide, running from the shoulder blade to the last rib, and is about as thick as one's hand or finger. It is from seven to eleven inches broad; tapering to a feather edge on the lower side. It will weigh from five to eleven pounds, according to the size and condition of the animal. This substance is taken off and dipped in hot grease for half a minute, then is hung up inside of a lodge to dry and smoke for twelve hours. It will keep indefinitely, and is used as a substitute for bread, but is superior to any bread that was ever made. It is eaten with the lean and dried meat, and is tender and sweet and very nourishing, for it seems to satisfy the appetite. When going on the war-path the Indians would take some dried meat and some depuyer to live on, and nothing else, not even if they were to be gone for months."(1)

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(1) McClintock - op. cit. p. 237.

(2) Hamilton - My sixty years on the Plains, p. 32.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282.

(4) G.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22.

(6) Hamilton - op. cit. p. 32; A. and G.

(7) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 237-8.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 207.

Marrow-fat alone secured as described above, was often packed in "stomach bags",(2) to be eaten at some future time with dried meat.(3) Tallow seems also to have been thus preserved.(4)

Surplus meat not used in making pemmican was either eaten fresh, or dried for storage. It might then be "eaten without further treatment, though it was usually toasted over the fire or even fried in a pan."(5)

The Blackfoot dietary was by no means restricted to meat. A large number of berries, together with certain roots were constantly in use. The following varieties are mentioned both by McClintock(6) and by Grinnell,(7) service berries (Amelanchior oblongifolia or Amelanchior alnifolia); camass (Camassia esculenta); bitter-root (Lewisia rediviva); McClintock alone mentions wild cherries (this he identifies as Prunus demissa, but Coues(8) considers it to be Prunus emarginata); wild onions (Allium recurvatum); wild potatoes (Claytonia lanceolata); wild rhubarb (Heracleum lanatum);(6) Grinnell alone mentions chokecherries, bull-berries (Shepherdia argentea) and the berries of the red willow. Strawberries, etc., may also have been used.(9) The root "that is nearly a foot long, and two or three inches in circumference, which is shaped like a carrot, and tastes like a turnip"(1) was undoubtedly the prairie turnip (Psoralea esculenta). It has also been identified as Lithospermum linearifolium. For Schultz's information we can confidently identify it as the plant his Indians called "mas".(2) These "were often peeled, strung and hung up to dry, though a great many were consumed in the raw state. Again, the dried turnip was pounded fine and used for thickening soup."(3) According to Harmon, this "broth" was "one of their most dainty dishes, at their feasts."(1) Denig informs us that it was sometimes made into "passable bread" by the Assiniboine.(4) It seems to have been a principal vegetable food. The camas, a favourite with the Plateau Indians, was found "rarely east of the foothills of the mountains in Montana"(5) and was therefore not widely used. It was cooked in pits, in a somewhat ceremonial fashion.(6) Roots like the prairie turnip and camas were formerly gathered with the (now ceremonial) digging stick.(3) The stalks of the wild rhubarb were peeled and roasted, sprinkled with salt (?) and eaten hot.(7)

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(1) Hamilton - op. cit. p. 32. See also Grinnell - op. cit. p. 206.

(2) F.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282; F.

(4) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 24.

(6) McClintock - op. cit. p. 529.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 203-4.

(8) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 816.

(9) F. See Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 153.

Cocking found that the "best fare" of the Blackfeet was "generally berries infused in water with fat, very agreeable eating."(8) Since service-berries were the most important fruit,(5) Cocking's repast may have been prepared from these. Women beat the laden branches over a robe, dried the fruit and stored it for use.(1) The "small berry, about the size of a common current, shaped like an egg" which Harmon saw used in the dried state for boiling in broth and mixing with pemmican was also the service-berry;(2) chokecherries were pounded up, dried and mixed with pemmican.(1) Cherries, (presumably Prunus demissa) were pounded, dried, and also used in making pemmican, though they were sometimes used alone or made into soups.(3)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282.

(2) Schultz - My life as an Indian, passim.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22.

(4) Denig - op. cit. p. 408.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 20.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 24-5; Grinnell - op. cit. p. 204.

(7) McClintock - op. cit. p. 485.
See Denig - op. cit. p. 408.

(8) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

Rose hips (Rosea cinnamonea) were smashed, mixed with fat, made into round balls, roasted and eaten. They might also be stored in hide bags or made into soup while fresh.(4) This probably exhausts the list of vegetable products which can be said with any degree of certainty to have been used as food, though it might be well to add Wissler's observation that "practically all kinds of vegetable foods were dried and stored."(5)

Utensils and Dishes

Cooking utensils were necessarily few. The handiest container for boiling soups and meats was the paunch of a buffalo. According to Grinnell, the "lining" of the paunch was "torn off in large pieces" and used for making "buckets, cups, basins and dishes."(6) Such dishes were more or less flexible, and hence easily carried.(7) Henry mentions their usefulness as water containers(8) while Wissler adds that boiling was done in them by throwing in hot stones and gives illustrations of the method.(1) Fresh hides might be similarly employed.(1)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 282.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 24.

(4) G.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22. For good accounts of the plant foods used by these Indians, see McClintock - The Old North Trail, pp. 524-31, and McClintock - Medizinal-und Nutzpflanzen der Schwarzfuss-Indianer.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 201.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 202.

(8) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

Birch bark seems never to have been used for dishes, since it is not common in the country.(2) Whether the Blackfeet had earthenware dishes is still a matter of dispute, but the evidence points to the affirmative. Cocking was the first to report its use amongst them. "I found in an old tent-place belonging to the Archithinue Natives, part of a earthen vessel, in which they dress their victuals; It appeared to have been in the form of an earthen pan."(3) And again, "Their Victuals are dressed in earthen pots, of their own Manufacturing; much in the same form as Newcastle pots, but without feet."(4) Though no examples are known, tradition says earthen vessels were made and used, and it appears that the Sarsi shared the custom with the Blackfeet.(5) Tradition seems to waver between two fairly distinct processes of manufacture. According to some informants the pots were made of a white sticky clay, found in rocky places, which was moulded into shape and stood beside the fire to dry. A variant description says pulverized rock and some sticky material were used.(6) Such pots were used for boiling.(7) The other tradition relates that a bag of the required size was made from buffalo skin. "Sand (evidently clay and sand) mixed with water was plastered on the inner surface of the bag and allowed to dry in the sun. The skin cover was then removed. Sometimes a handle made from the neck-gristle of a bison was attached through holes made near the rim."(1) Wissler's version of the same tradition is that these pots were made of mud and sand, shaped over a rawhide bag filled with sand. When the moulding was done, the sand was emptied, and the bag withdrawn. The pot was then filled with fat and hung over the fire to harden. "They were supported by a rawhide cord passing around the rim."(2) The two versions of the first tradition are fairly consistent, and except for the method of hardening; the two versions of the last tradition are as nearly uniform as could be expected. For it must be borne in mind that these traditions were collected on widely separated reserves -- in fact, in different countries.(3) Coupled with Cocking's evidence, and Sapir's belief in the existence of the craft among the Sarsi, the current traditions should be given serious consideration. Lack of material evidence alone prevents a conclusion being reached in the matter, but it is only to be expected that such crude artifacts as those whose manufacture has been described above, could not survive the destructive forces of the elements to the present time.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 27 and plate I.

(2) F. See also Harmon - op. cit. p. 279, who most likely had the Cree in mind.

(3) Cocking - op. cit. p. 108.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(5) Sapir - A note on Sarsi pottery.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

(7) B.

The cooking vessels, described by Grinnell as having been made of rock, are somewhat of a puzzle. None seems to exist, unless they were merely mortars hollowed by pecking. They are said to have been used for boiling.(4) A tradition of this kind of dish seems to persist,(5) though Wissler does not mention it.(2)

Dishes of wood and horn were common enough. Knots of poplar and aspen,(6) birch and other softwoods(7) "were worked into shape by burning, scraping down with bits of stone and finally polishing."(1) Bowls were also made from "knots and protuberance of trees, dug out and smoothed by fire and knife or by the latter alone."(2)

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(1) Paraphrase of a statement by E.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

(3) The first version in each case on the Blackfoot Reserve in Canada, and the second on Montana reserves. In Canada, A., D. and G. had heard of the use of earthen pots of some sort.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 202.

(5) F. described such a bowl.

(6) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

(7) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 79.
Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 28.

The horn of mountain goat made good culinary utensils such as dippers and skimmers.(3) Flat dishes could also be made from it, by boiling, splitting and sewing it with sinew.(4) Some of these were quite large.(5) Spoons might be made of it(4) but buffalo horn was usually reserved for this purpose. The latter merely had to be boiled till soft, cut open and dried to the requisite shape.(6) Spoons were also frequently made from knots of trees;(7) and clam shells were in common use for the eating of soups.(8)

Knives were made of bone, and probably of stone.(9) Chipped stone artifacts from 8 to 12 cm. in length and of the general shape of an unnotched leaf-shaped arrow point are occasionally found. It is quite possible that these were even used as knives.(10) Grinnell says a stick was fitted to them, forming a handle.(11)

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(1) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 79.
Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 28.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203. Corroborated by E. and F.

(3) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 79.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 203.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.
Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 29.

(6) E. and F.

(7) See Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 202-3; G.

(8) G.

(9) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200, says they were originally made of stone.

(10) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.

(11) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200.

One other article which requires to be mentioned is the maul used to break up bones and to pound pemmican. They were "usually made of green sticks fitted as closely as possible into a groove made in the stone, the whole being bound together by a covering of hide put on green, tightly fitted and strongly sewed. This, as it shrunk in drying, bound the different parts of the implement together in the strongest possible manner."(1) Evidence tends to show that these stones were not grooved by human agency, but were found so.(2)

Dwellings

The ancient dwelling of the Blackfeet was the lodge, or tipi, constructed of buffalo skins. Ordinarily, they were not pitched in any regular fashion, as described by Henday,(3) except upon the occasion of the Sun Dance; at such an event, the two hundred lodges he saw would not be an incredibly large number. In the Sun Dance camp, the tipis were pitched in a circle around the Sun Lodge, each band having its herditary position with relation to all the other bands. According to Grinnell's account, the ordinary members pitched around the circumference; within was a smaller circle consisting of the lodges of certain leaders.(4) This might account for "the broad street open at both ends," which Henday saw.(3)

It is quite certain that the "houses of mud, sticks and stones" which Grinnell(5) speaks of were never used.(6) On the contrary, the tipi of buffalo skin must have been the sole abode. It was an almost conical structure, slightly more vertical at the back,(1) made of 12 or 14 cowskins,(2) though exceptionally large ones contained as many as 40, prepared by the women. At a sewing bee held for the purpose, the women sewed the skins together with sinew thread,(3) and celebrated the completion of the job with a feast.(4) Four poles constituted the framework of the tipi.(5) Other straight spruce or pine poles, cut by the women, were laid over these, sometimes to the number of 30, depending on the size of the lodge, although 18 was probably the average number.(6) Over these again the heavy skin cover was fastened. At the top were two flaps or "ears" which formed a cowl to provide a draft;(7) they were regulated by two movable poles, in accordance with the direction of the wind.(8) The cover was held down on the outside by stakes driven into the ground(9) and frequently weighted with heavy stones.(10) The small, oval door, which faced the east was merely a

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200. Corroborated by A.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 22. They are said to be found abundantly on what are known locally as the "Hammer Hills" near Strathmore - A.

(3) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 224.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 198.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 108; F.

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(1) Grinnell - Lodges of the Blackfeet, p. 655.

(2) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 198.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 100.
According to Grinnell - Lodges of the Blackfeet, p. 650 and McClintock - The Blackfoot tipi, p. 89, an even number of skins was always used.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 101; A. and C.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 89.

(4) McClintock - op. cit. p. 92; A. and C.

(5) Wissler - Types of dwellings and their distribution in Central North America, p. 481.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 86. Grinnell - op. cit. p. 651.

(6) For a detailed description of the lodge and its erection, see Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, pp. 99-108.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 86.

(7) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 198.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 105.

(8) Jenness - op. cit. p. 90.

(9) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 199. Wissler - op. cit. p. 104.

(10) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 198. Wissler - op. cit. p. 108.

A typical decorated tipi. (Photo by Kenneth Kidd, courtesy of National Museums of Canada.)

hole in the side of the lodge-cover, of which the lowest point was about 18 inches above the ground.(1) It was fitted with a curtain, originally no doubt of rawhide held taut with sticks.(1) Such doors were often provided with bells in the form of dew-claws of cattle, or moose-hoofs.(2)

The exterior of the cover was generally decorated in some way. It offered an excellent canvas upon which the man could depict the great events of his life -- his dreams, his war exploits and his hunting prowess in a sort of pictographic biography. Such work was always done by the men, in a realistic freehand fashion, as contrasted with the geometric patterns employed in the beaded and other art work of the women.(3) Even astronomical motifs were frequently employed,(4) and occasionally buffalo tails were attached as an added attraction.(5) Paints of vivid colours were held in esteem, while so great was the popularity of tipi decoration, that some men seem to have been specialists in the art.(6)

The tipi was a commodious and comfortable dwelling.(7) The average diameter was about 14 feet,(8) though exceptionally large ones might measure 30 feet.(9) Around the lower four feet of the inside walls a lining of well-tanned buffalo skin was stretched, so as to leave a few inches of the bottom on the ground. This inner wall, usually brightly painted by the women in geometric designs deflected any air currents up towards the ventilator, thus preventing drafts. In the centre of the floor, a little nearer the door than the rear, the fire was anciently kindled in a circular fireplace of smooth stones.(1) Just behind was a small altar for the burning of sweet-grass incense. The beds were arranged along the sides, the owner's family sleeping at the south end of the hearth, and guests at the north. In ancient times, buffalo and bear skins with the hair on were used as wraps for sitting in and for bed clothes.(2) Just inside the door on the south, household utensils were packed; riding-gear etc. on the opposite side. At the head of each bed was a tripod supporting the willow back-rest.(3) Between these the ceremonial outfit of the family was stowed away.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 104. McClintock - op. cit. p. 86, says the skin of a coyote or a buffalo calf was used.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 105.

(3) McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfeet, p. 13.
See Wissler - op. cit. p. 135 and McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 214, for the tools and methods employed in making the designs.

(4) McClintock - The tragedy of the Blackfeet, p. 13.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 199.

(6) McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 214.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 527, add that it was a clean one.

(8) Jenness - op. cit. p. 90.
Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 198-9.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 105.

(9) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 198.

The owner sat opposite the fire on the south side, with his wife or wives on his right and his children on his left. Guests were seated on the opposite side of the fire, the most important position being directly opposite to the owner. To pass between the host and the fire, or between the guests and the fire was a gross breach of propriety.(4)

Fuel and the Making of Fire

In a country such as the Blackfeet inhabited, where wood has always been scarce, the problem of obtaining fuel has been a pressing one. Henry tells us that the "women have much difficulty in collecting firewood,"(5) so that their fuel must often have been "turf, &

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(1) See Wissler - op. cit. pp. 105-8, for a description of the interior.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 277; B.
See also Wissler - op. cit. p. 107.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 199, says two, one at the head and one at the foot. This was also the case when two married couples occupied the same lodge. (Wissler - op. cit. p. 107).

(4) Wissler - Social organization, pp. 51-2.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

Horse-dung dryed."(1) No doubt buffalo chips constituted the most reliable, if not altogether satisfactory supply. When wood was available, it was naturally preferred, though the securing of it was one of the most arduous tasks that the women had to perform. "Those who have no axes," -- to quote Henry -- "fasten together the ends of two long poles,(2) which two women then hook over dry limbs of large trees, and thus break them off. They also use lines(3) for the same purpose; a woman throws a line seven or eight fathoms over a dry limb and jerks it until the limb breaks off. Others again set fire to the roots of large trees, which having burned down, the branches supply a good stock of fuel. The trunk is seldom attacked by those who have axes, as chopping blisters their hands."(4) Such a description is so clear as to leave little to be desired.(5) Brushwood likely supplied summer fuel, then as now; and the conical pile of wood so widely used in Canada to-day is no doubt a survival from the past of a widespread custom.(6)

Very little can be said regarding the aboriginal methods of kindling fire. While the simple fire-drill may have been the only device used,(7) there are traditions at least that fire was struck from flint;(8) even Cocking says that "their fire tackling" was "a black stone used as flint, & a kind of Ore as a steel, using tuss balls as tinder."(1) Suitable stone for striking fire occurs in the Blackfoot country,(2) but whence the necessary iron came is a very different matter.

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(1) Henday - op. cit. p. 339.

(2) A long pole with sticks fastened near the end so as to form a cross was also used for this purpose - D. and G.

(3) Probably rawhide lines - F.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

(5) Details of this description were corroborated by F.

(6) Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 33.

(7) Wissler - op. cit., p. 32.
Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 56.
From Jefferson - op. cit. p. 71 and from Paget - The People of the Plains, p. 103, we learn that the bow-drill was used by the Cree.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200, refers to "fire-sticks" and an old informant spoke of rubbing "cotton-wood till it smoked." (F).

(8) G.

The "tuss-balls" consisted of various kinds of fungus which could be used for tinder.(2) The favourite variety was that found on the birch tree, and especially abundant in the Touchwood Hills along the Beaver River.(3) McKeevor thus describes its use among the Crees; "the perogan, or tinder the Indians make use of, is a kind of fungus, that grows on the outside of a birch tree. There are two kinds, one hard and not unlike rhubarb, the other soft and smooth. The latter is prepared for use by laying it in hot water and thus reducing it to a fine powder. The hard kind is very easily ignited, catching even the smallest spark that falls from the steel, once on fire it is very difficult to extinguish it."(4) Wissler believes that preference was given to a "bulbous variety growing on the ground."(2) Small dead branches and the bark of the cotton-wood were used for starting the fire.(2) According to Grinnell, fire, which was a precious element, was carried about in a "fire-horn". This was a buffalo horn slung over the shoulder, lined with moist, rotten wood and fitted with a plug. Live coals were put in when camp was struck and when new camping ground was reached, the man carrying the horn would turn its contents out on a pile of dry tinder and rekindle the fire. From this one blaze, all the fires in the camp were lighted by the women.(3)

Weapons

The variety of Blackfoot weapons was not great. Bows, arrows, clubs and lances were used in killing game;(5) for warfare, we may add to these, the three or four types of stone club,(1) and the wooden "knobkerrie".(2) A long-handled spear for close combat may have been used by the Blackfeet in common with their neighbours.(2) As for the lance, it was probably a common weapon at one time;(3) it persisted until the last century among both Blackfeet(3) and Assiniboine.(4) Tradition has it that the lance was a long wooden spear on the end of which was a stone point, used both for warfare and buffalo-hunting.(5) This "big arrow" is said to antedate the historical arrow.(5) The stone clubs might be either pointed, axe-shaped or end in a ball.(1) These like the tomahawk, were fastened over the wrist by a loop and used only at close range.(4)

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(1) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(2) Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 32.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 201.

(4) McKeevor - A voyage to Hudson's Bay, p. 51.

(5) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 84.

Of the few authentic Blackfoot bows known, one is very fully described as follows: "It is a piece of split red hickory, heavily backed with sinew, with short rounded nocks. Length, 40 inches; diameter below the handgrip is 1 3/8 by 5/8, circumference, 3 1/4 inches; at the mid-limb it is 1 1/4 by 1/2, circumference 3 inches; below the nock, 3/4 by 1/2, circumference, 2 inches. On cross-section it is lenticular, or a flat oval. The sinew draws it into a reflexed position when not braced. The string is made of two strands of twisted sinew, having a slipknot at the upper neck, and half-hitches at the lower. When braced it is a springy, vigorous weapon, and by far the best shooter in the group. When drawn 20 inches it weighs 40 pounds and shoots 153 yards.

"... This seems to be the type of weapon that was used on horseback and doubtless it is strong enough for buffalo hunting. Mr. Jessup assures me that it is a buffalo bow. If this be the case, we must assume that it does not take a very powerful weapon to kill bison."(1)

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(1) Wissler - Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 163.
Jenness - op. cit. p. 310.

(2) Jenness - op. cit. p. 310.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 162.

(4) Denig - op. cit. p. 555.

(5) E. See Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200.

Another Blackfoot bow illustrated by the same writer, is of the same type, apparently less carefully made but stronger.(2)

The military bow has been so long superseded by the gun that little is know about it. Judging from the description of one given by Wissler, it was of the double-curve type, made of wood and sinew-backed. The grip was wrapped with a narrow hide thong, and ends encased in some sort of membrane. The particular bow referred to was painted red and black. The string was of sinew.(3) At any rate, we may be certain that the Blackfoot bow conformed to the usual Plains type, i.e., double curved, sinew-backed, rather flat, and seldom longer than 3 1/2 feet as distinct from the immense bows of the eastern woodlands.(4) The game bows were, as has been shown, somewhat longer, not double-curved, but with a slight reverse at the centre.(5) Ash was the favourite material for bows,(6) although those used in hunting were often made of birch,(5) and chokecherry, hazel and hickory were sometimes used.(7) The tradition of sinew-backing still lingers on.(8) The string was always of sinew, which apparently was subjected to a stretching process before it was affixed(1) to the double nocks.(2)

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(1) Pope - A study of bows and arrows, p. 342. The bow described above is illustrated in plate 48, fig. 18, opposite page 283.

(2) Pope - op. cit. plate 47, fig. 12, opposite page 380.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 157.

(4) Verrill - The American Indian, p. 298.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 156.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 157.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 199.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 199-200.

(8) E. This man and A. asserted independently that snake-skins were soaked and applied to the back of the bow, the head being fixed at the right end of the bow.

"Arrows were made of shoots of service berry wood,"(3) though sometimes of willow. Three feathers, probably from the wing of a hawk, split through the quill and dyed various colours, were bound to the shaft with "many turns of sinew or narrow bands of some membrane."(2) Each arrow was about twenty-two inches long, and notched at the end.(2) In order to permit blood to flow freely arrow shafts, it is said, were often grooved(4) by the process of pushing back and forth through a hole in a buffalo rib on the inside of which were one or two rough projections. Whether arrows were painted for the purpose of identification we cannot be sure, but we do know that they were painted in bands,(5) usually of red and yellow.(6) The owner may also have been able to identify his arrow from the feather on it,(5) or as Wissler rightly observes from its "general individuality".(7)

Grinnell does not enlighten us as to the kind of "stone implement" used to smooth arrows.(8) According to our information, a number of sharp stones were taken in one hand. Over these was placed a flat piece of wood. The shaft to be smoothed was then pushed back and forth between the wood and the stones until the job was completed.(9) Such a process is but a variant of that described by Harmon.(1) Arrow-straighteners were probably buffalo bones perforated with a hole,(2) though the customary method was doubtless to straighten the shaft in the teeth.(3)

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(1) E.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 157.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 157.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200.

(4) Verrill - op. cit. p. 298.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200; E.

(6) D.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 161.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200.

(9) E., who says he saw his father employ this method.
D. asserted that hay was frequently used for the same purpose.

In ancient times, bone and deer horn seem to have prevailed and buffalo horn may have been used as well.(4) Henday mentions only "bone spears and darts".(5) Why these materials should have been used to the exclusion of stone it is difficult to understand, because the Blackfeet must, like their neighbours, have known how to shape the abundant supplies of flint-like stones into points; they apparently did so in historical times, though the knowledge of how it was done is now lost. That the craft should have been learned and lost within the century following the first European contact, when iron became known, seems incredible, and we feel confident that stone points were used at least to some extent in prehistoric times.

Grinnell informs us that there were two types of arrow heads -- the "barbed slender point for war, and barbless for hunting,"(6) be they of metal, stone or bone. And it is a matter of common knowledge that for warfare the point was bound but loosely to the shaft, so that when it penetrated, it would remain in the wound when the shaft was withdrawn, whereas it was tied on firmly for hunting.(7) Arrows were never poisoned.(8) The points were fastened into a notch about 1 cm. deep and bound with sinew or membrane.(1) It is most unlikely that points were marked for identification in any way, for the reasons given above in connection with arrows.(2)

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 327.

(2) A.

(3) A. and C.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 157-8. This was denied by A.

(5) Henday - op. cit. p. 335.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 200. This was denied by D., yet there is some evidence to support such a statement.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 158. This was confirmed by E., who added that the point was merely fastened on one side for warfare, thus ensuring its remaining in the wound. The same method is attributed to the Plateau Indians by Henry (Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 809).

(8) E.

For quivers, "they prefer the skin of a cougar, for which they give a horse. The tail hangs down from the quiver, is trimmed with red cloth on the inner side, embroidered with white beads, and ornamented at the end or elsewhere, with strips of skin, like tassels."(3) Notwithstanding Maximilian's statement, the Blackfeet, like the Assiniboine,(4) seem to have preferred otter skins for their quivers, and usually attached a tail-pendant and often combined a bow-case and a quiver in one article.(5) The decoration, of course, varied considerably.

Shields were common but were more properly regarded as charms than as weapons of defence.(6) They were made from the hide from the breast of the buffalo bull.(7) This was soaked on the ground with boiling water, shaped over a heap of earth, weighted and left to dry.(7) The edges were then trimmed, and a design painted in the inner surface in black, red and green,(7) according to the dream of the maker.(8) From nineteen to twenty-eight eagle feathers were attached to a strip of red cloth around the circumference of the shield.(9)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 157.

(2) Marking for identification was denied by E.

(3) Maximilian - op. cit. p. 257.

(4) Lowie - op. cit. p. 28.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 158.

(6) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 84.

(7) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 163. A similar description was given by A.

(8) Jenness - op. cit. p. 310; D.

(9) Wissler - op. cit. p. 162.

Transportation and the Coming of the Horse

It would be difficult to imagine a people less skilled in navigation than the Blackfeet. Their highest notion of that art was a rude raft made of sticks or logs tied together with rawhide lashing; on this they placed their belongings, and four men each taking a rope in his teeth, swam and towed the raft across the stream.(1) Such an outfit was ordinarily used by a war party; when a camp had to cross a river, the skin tipis were "folded into large dish-shaped bundles supported by cross pieces of wood, forming a kind of raft, upon which children, old people and baggage were placed and ferried across."(2) Even the common Missouri "bull-boat" was not used;(3) and Henday found them unacquainted "with a Canoe".(4) Against this, however, is Thompson's very definite statement that the Peigans used canoes in summer.(5) Probably he had in mind only those who dwelt close to the mountains.

For what they lacked on water, the Blackfeet made up on land. Anciently they had numerous dogs which served as beasts of burden "both in summer and winter to carry their baggage and provisions."(6) The methods used in the era of dogs were adapted to the horse when the "elk-dog" appeared. The "travois", a pair of long poles tied into a V-shaped contrivance, was hitched to the dog or the horse as the case might be. Either a circular netting, or a rectangular frame with cross-pieces like a ladder, was fastened between these poles upon which the baggage was placed.(7)

It was the possession of horses, noted by Cocking in 1772-73, which gave the Blackfoot women "a great advantage over the other Women who are

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 87; E., C. and F.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 87.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 87; D.

(4) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.

(5) Thompson - op. cit. p. 345.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 346. Men may have acted as carriers on occasion but this is extremely doubtful (Grinnell - op. cit. p. 186).

(7) For a full description of the travois see Wissler - op. cit. p. 90.

Ration day at the ration house, 1935.
(Photo by Kenneth Kidd, courtesy of the National Museums of Canada.)

either carrying or hauling on Sledges every day in the year."(1) Apparently the tribes to the north and east, i.e., in the country which Cocking had traversed in order to reach Blackfoot territory, did not possess horses at that time, at least not in numbers. Nevertheless the younger La Verendrye noticed horses among the Assiniboine in 1742, and his father saw them among the Plains Cree five years earlier.(2) St. Pierre was the first to record the existence of horses among the Blackfeet, that is, 1751.(3) Three years later Henday saw "several Wild Horses"; at the same time the Blackfeet possessed enough of them to allow "several tents" to come to him on horseback.(4) These horses were "fine tractible animals, about 14 hands high; lively and clean made" and "The Natives are good Horsemen."(5) In 1772 Cocking, and probably many another trader, knew the Blackfeet as the "Equestrian Natives", who appeared "more like Europeans than Americans."(6) Umfreville observed in 1784 that the Blackfeet's "principal inducement in going to war", as in modern times, was a desire to carry off their neighbours' horses,(7) and by this latter date the distribution of the horse over the Plains seems to be complete.(8)

To quote Webb on the spread of the horse: "It is generally accepted by anthropologists that these herds originated from the horses lost or abandoned by De Soto about 1541. Whether they came from De Soto's horses, or from those of Coronado, or from other explorers is not material; we know that the Kiowa and Missouri Indians were mounted by 1682; the Pawnee, by 1700; the Comanche, by 1714; the Plains Cree and Arikara, by 1738; the Assiniboine, Crow, Mandan, Snake and Teton, by 1742; and the most northern tribe, the Sarsi, by 1784. How much earlier these Indians rode horses we do not know; but we can say that the dispersion of horses which began in 1541 was completed in the Plains area by 1784."(1)

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(1) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

(2) Wissler - The influence of the horse in the development of Plains culture, p.6.

(3) St. Pierre - Memoir or brief journal, p. clxiii.

(4) Henday - op. cit. p. 335.

(5) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.

(6) Cocking - op. cit. pp. 110-11.

(7) Umfreville - op. cit. p. 200.

(8) Webb - The Great Plains, p. 57.
Wissler - op. cit. p. 16.

The advent of the horse must have profoundly altered the outlook and activities of these Indians. For instance, it "must have stimulated roving and the pursuit of the buffalo and discouraged tendencies toward fixed abodes and agriculture."(2)

Traits which were characteristic of the horse-giving culture, i.e., the Spanish, were taken over by the cultures to which the horse was added. Thus, the Spanish custom of mounting from the right side is found among the present-day Blackfeet, contrary to the custom of the surrounding white population. Likewise the Spanish form of saddle is still used, though modified by the limited resources of the Indians. Wissler bears testimony to the accuracy of Henry's description of two of the three types of Blackfoot saddle.(3)

"The saddles these people used" writes Henry "are of two kinds. The one which I suppose to be of the most ancient construction is made of wood well joined, and covered with raw buffalo hide, which in drying binds every part tight. This frame rises about ten inches before and behind; the tops are bent over horizontally and spread out, forming a flat piece about six inches in diameter. The stirrup, attached to the frame by a leather thong, is a piece of bent wood, over which is stretched raw buffalo hide, making it firm and strong. When an Indian is going to mount he throws his buffalo robe over the saddle, and rides on it. The other saddle, which is the same as that of the Assiniboines and Crees, is made by shaping two pieces of parchment on dressed leather, about 20 inches long and 14 broad, through the length of which are sewed two parallel lines three inches apart, on each side of which the saddle is well stuffed with moose or red deer hair. Under each kind of saddle are placed two or three folds of soft dressed buffalo skin, to keep the horse from getting a sore back."(1) The high-pommelled saddles were used principally by the women, and the low-pommelled frame type by men and women.(2)

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(1) Webb - op. cit. p. 57.

(2) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 22.

(3) Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 92.

For halters the Blackfeet used ropes of hair as mentioned by Henday.(3) Doubtless these were made of the hair from the forelock of bison as described by informants;(4) it is very doubtful if human hair was employed for this purpose, unless exceptionally.(5) Halters, hobbles and lines were frequently, perhaps ordinarily, made of long strips of rawhide; sometimes the strips were braided.(5) With this equipment the Blackfeet horses were "turned out to grass, their legs being fettered: and when wanted, are fastened to lines cut of Buffalo skin, that stretches along & is fastened to stakes drove in the ground. They have hair halters, Buffalo skin pads, & stirrups of the same."(3)

Broadly speaking, the horse trappings of the Blackfeet were not distinctive, but conformed to the general type in use among all the horse-using tribes.(6)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. pp. 526-7.
Henday - op. cit. p. 338, also mentions the pads of buffalo skin.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 93. For a detailed study of the Blackfeet saddles, see ibid., pp. 92-4.

(3) Henday - op. cit. p. 338.

(4) A. and F. Maximilian - op. cit. p. 251, saw ropes of buffalo hair.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 95.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 96.

CHAPTER IV.

-- SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, WAR AND RELIGION --

Social Structure

The smallest social unit amongst the Blackfeet was the family. Each family, consisting of a husband, his wife or wives, and their children lived usually in a lodge by itself. When sons grew up and married, they usually established separate households, so that there was little opportunity for the exercise of authority by elders. The husband and father was head of the family which lived in his lodge, in relation to whom he was a despot in fact if not in deed. Wives and children were responsible to him absolutely, and over them he exercised the power of life and death.

The next largest unit was the clan, which had both political and social functions.(1) It was an exogamous division, although it was permissible to marry into one's own clan,(2) or one could join his wife's clan.(3) For the most part, clansmen were actually related, and it was the fear that some blood relationship might unconsciously be overlooked that usually was brought forward as an objection to marriages within the clan.(2) The Blackfoot clan has been termed a "patriarchal group"(3) and descent was certainly patrilineal.(4) On the other hand, there "is no real evidence of a belief in a band ancestor, human or animal; and hence, no band totem."(2) Broadly speaking, the system may be said to have been founded on real blood relationship in a free and un-arbitrary fashion.(2)

Every clan had a name, which however had "no relation to a founder, but is supposed to designate, in a way, some peculiarity common to the groups as a whole. Thus the names are in theory and kind the same as tribe names -- Blood, Peigan, etc., originating normally after the manner of the object names in general and apparently not in conformity to some system or belief concerning descent or relationship."(1) Thus, the White-Headed clan of the Siksika was so named because all its "chiefs" were white-haired, and the Dry-Meat clan received its name because its members were said to pack their meat before it was thoroughly dried.(2)

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(1) Wissler - Social organization, p. 22.
Curtis - The North American Indian, VI, pp. 29 & 154.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 19.

(3) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 182.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 18 & 20.

If a clan dwindled to insignificance, it was dissolved and its members allied themselves with other groups.(3) Its name would then fall into disuse. On the other hand, new clans were formed when occasion arose, and new names were found for them.

Each clan was assigned a definite and permanent position in the "camp circle" organized at each Sun Dance. At such times the clan-authority was subject to the higher tribal-authority very much as a province, among us, may be supreme with regard to lesser municipalities, but itself subject to a central authority with regard to federal matters. When the tribe was not assembled in the camp circle, the clans dispersed far and wide. They then functioned as hunting units,(3) each living apart and occupying separate territory. "When two or more bands choose to occupy immediate parts of the same valley, their camps are segregated and, if possible, separated by a brook, a point of highland, or other natural barrier."(3) Moreover, they moved frequently; no clan claimed a locality permanently.(4)

For the greater part of the year, the clans were scattered far and wide over all the tribal domains in the food-quest. At such times the only visible authority was that of the head men of one's own clan. Though recognized as leaders, their tenure of office rested upon public approval, which they took good care to deserve. But on the other hand, they were careful not to offend by too great zeal in the execution of their duties, and usually acted only upon the advice of their colleagues. A chief was regarded as the "guardian and defender of the social order in its broadest sense." He could not resort to the use of force to maintain order, but he was expected to act as mediator between factions. For instance, when, as Wissler quaintly puts it, it was "suspicioned" that a man contemplated a crime or the exaction of personal vengeance, the head men visited him and tried to dissuade him, pointing out the folly of such a procedure and the danger to the public peace.(1) It was the duty of clansmen to "hang together at all times."(2)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 18.

(2) A. An example of "contrary speech".

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 20.

(4) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 182; B.

If it were a quarrel between members of two clans, the respective leaders came together and tried to bring about a reconciliation. For clans as a unit were held responsible for all acts of their members.(2) For instance, the murder of a member of clan B committed by a member of clan A could only be atoned for by the death of a member of clan A at the hands of clan B. The chiefs might be able to persuade the clan to make satisfactory restitution in property; if not, a battle might ensue. The clan killing the greatest number then moved to a distant territory and lived in a state of semi-isolation for a year or more. The clan seems to have been a group of major importance in Blackfoot social organization.

Concerning the position of chiefs Thompson writes as follows: "Among people who have no laws, injuries will arise, without authority to redress them; this is felt and acknowledged, and most would willingly see a power that could proportion the punishment to the offence, but to whom shall the power be given, and who could dare to take it, even when offered to him; not One. The chiefs that are acknowledged as such, have no power beyond their influence, which would immediately cease by any act of authority and they are careful not to arrogate any superiority over others."(3)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 24.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 20.

(3) Thompson - David Thompson's narrative, p. 363.

Two contradictory theories are held as to the process by which men became band leaders or "chiefs". The simplest and most logical is that of Wissler; he believes the head men constituted "the social aristocracy, holding their place in society in the same indefinite and uncertain manner as the social leaders of our own communities. Thus, we hear that no Blackfoot can aspire to be looked upon as a head man unless he is able to entertain well, often invite others to his board, and make a practice of relieving the wants of his less fortunate band members ... Thus, the head men are those who are or have been social leaders. Naturally, individual worth counts in such contests and he who is born to lead will both in matters great and small ... Before the reservation system came in deeds of the warpath were also essential to the production of a head man, for in them was the place to demonstrate the power to lead."(1) Certainly, social prestige has been a determinant in modern times at any rate. "These head men of uncertain tenure come to regard one or two of their number as leaders, or chiefs. Such chiefs rarely venture to act without the advice of some head men, as to stand alone would be next to fatal. In tribal assemblies, the head men of the band usually look to one of these as spokesman, and speak of him as their chief."

Thompson, on the other hand, explicitly says that the office of chief "appeared hereditary in his family, as his father had been the civil Chief, and his eldest son was to take his place at his death and occasionally acted for him."(2) According to Curtis, likewise, a chief, "recognising that his end was near, would summon the men of his band, and name his successor and deliver a speech urging obedience to him. If he died without naming his successor, the members of the band agreed on the best man among his relations. Preference was shown for his brothers, then for his nephews and sons. Good sense, means, and hospitality were the qualities desired in a chief. Often the chief had a younger brother whom he groomed for the office, and in such cases the individual was named by the people, even if the chief's death was so sudden as to prevent him from publicly naming his choice.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 23.
See Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 219.

(2) Thompson - op. cit. p. 346.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 219, specifically denies the hereditary nature of the chieftainship.

"A chief attaining such an advanced age that his capacity for leadership was impaired delegated his office to a successor. The retiring chief thenceforth was relieved of all duties except making the public announcement for his successor. A chief always had a number of young, self-attached retainers living in his household, ready to do his bidding, guarding his horses, hunting, carrying messages."(1)

It is not impossible to reconcile these two opinions. Assuming that chiefs were selected as Wissler outlines in the first place, it is conceivable that such men might fall into the snare of nepotism and seek to transmit their influence as Thompson apparently saw and as Curtis may have seen. It may be significant, however, that neither author mentions chiefs who actually succeeded to the office in this manner. Thompson merely says that when Sagatow, the orator's son, officiated for him, he always wore a certain ornament -- "the backs of two fine otter skins covered with mother-of-pearl which from behind his neck hung down his breast below the belt" -- which was his father's "insignia of office". But it is quite plain that Sagatow was merely a crier or herald, and therefore a relatively insignificant, though pompous, official and not a chief at all. We have, therefore, only Curtis' assertion to bolster up the claims of hereditary chieftainship; we are not sure that he too was not beguiled by its glitter into mistaking the herald's office for the fountain of authority.

Of early historical chieftains, Thompson's Kootenai Appe is the shining exemplar. Traditions of him still abound. He was physically outstanding, tall, muscular, manly. He was mild-mannered, modest and kind. A suave politician, he appeared to disregard fame but always took care to deserve it. He was situated nearer to the Snakes than any other Blackfoot band -- a sort of vanguard, so to speak. And he saw to it that his military strategy was effective; he firmly believed in the superiority of numbers and carefully avoided jealousies among his allies and his men.(1)

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(1) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 182.

From what he said, it seems safe to infer that there was no such distinction as "war-chiefs" and "civil-chiefs". The so-called civil-chiefs were probably heralds, while the war-chiefs were actually the civil and military leaders of the band, as the exigencies of the moment might require.

How tribal chiefs were chosen cannot be accurately described for lack of information. Yet each of the three nations seems to have recognized one of their number as its head.(2) Wissler's opinion is that the succession was tacitly agreed upon by the clan head men when the time for a change approached.(2) He also believes that the chieftainship tended to gravitate within some particular clan; thus, the "Fat-Roasters" have supplied most of the Peigan chiefs. The main duty of these officials is to summon tribal councils.(2)

It would appear that the custodian of one of the pipe bundles -- which one is uncertain -- actually exercised great civil authority in the camp. He is said to have acted as judge and his "presence and voice are sufficient to quell all domestic disturbance, and altogether he holds more actual power and influence than even the civil and war chiefs."(3)

While the Siksika, Peigan and Blood are ethnically, linguistically and culturally one, there was no political unity except that of a vague confederation. Even the term "confederation" is of doubtful application, for while war probably never occurred between these kindred nations and was probably barred by mutual consent,(4) there cannot be said to have been any formal alliance. Given sufficient time and a suitable occasion, war would doubtless have occurred, in the absence of machinery to prevent it. A consciousness of ethnic unity, strengthened by tradition, induced them to preserve a united front in the face of common enemies, but failed to lead them into amalgamation or to raise any of them to a dominant position. The Sarsis, an Athabascan people, were regarded from time immemorial as a friendly people and the Gros Ventre made common cause with them more frequently than not. It was this group of five tribes which was generally known among the Europeans in the country as the "Blackfoot Confederacy".

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. pp. 346-7.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 25.

(3) Warren - History of the Ojibways, p. 69.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 208.
See Jenness - The Indians of Canada, p. 319, where it is pointed out that these people did not even use a common term to denote the whole three tribes.

The full majesty of the political organization was only visible for a short time once a year when the entire tribe assembled. At the beginning of summer, when the Sun Dance was about to be held, the clans of the tribe convened, and as a rule, did not disperse again till the time approached for the beginning of the autumn hunt. As soon as the clans began to assemble, a series of laws became operative, governing each individual in the tribe; it appointed the exact place where each clan should pitch its lodges in the camp circle; where each of the societies' lodges should be erected and so forth. Visitors were obliged to camp outside the circle. For this brief space, the individual could behold the entire nation to which he owed allegiance spread before his eyes; he could visualize it as a physical entity, and realize that the laws which bound him were not those of his clan chieftains, but the decisions of the corporate tribe, expressed through the chiefs in council. The government of a Blackfoot tribe bears striking resemblance to a democracy.

In all camps of appreciable size, some agency for maintenance of order was necessary. For instance, gambling was the cause of many bitter quarrels. Since the chiefs themselves dared not try to inforce discipline personally, they could, and did, as a body, direct one or other of the men's societies to act as camp-police, known in the literature as "soldiers".(1) Thompson draws a vivid picture of the close watch the police kept upon gamblers. "All these the Soldiers watch with attention, and as soon as they perceive any dispute arise, toss the gambling materials to the right and left, and kick the stakes in the same manner; to which the parties say nothing, but collect everything and begin again."(1) Rather an anticlimax, admittedly, but probably bloodshed was avoided. Other minor duties of the police were to keep children indoors when certain ceremonials were in progress, and to prevent stealing.(2) Probably the major responsiblity was to prevent surreptitious hunting by individuals. The camp depended for its food-supply upon the organized hunt; stalking and individual hunting might frighten off the herd and leave the camp exposed to the danger of starvation. "As the chief aim of an organized summer camp was to hunt buffalo and the success of a general hunt depended upon successful cooperation, the discipline was devised to that end. The head chief gave out orders for making and breaking camp, and rules and punishments were announced. Thus a man found running buffalo or riding about outside without orders might have his clothes torn off, be deprived of his arms, his horse's hair cropped. His tipi and personal property might be destroyed. However, these were extreme punishments, it being regarded as best to get along by persuading the would-be wrong-doer to desist. The punishments inflicted by the members of societies were not personally resented, as they were acting entirely within their rights."(3)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 219-20, says they acted on the direct orders of the chief.

Apparently any of the men's societies were liable to be chosen for police duty. Both Grinnell and Wissler(4) seem to imply this, though we cannot be sure. My own information is that among the Siksika, a society known as the "Black-soldiers" was considered a police force, but it was only one of a progressive series through which all males passed at some time or other, i.e., it was an age-group of the ordinary type.

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 359.

(2) A. and D.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.
See Grinnell - op. cit. p. 220.
McClintock - The Old North Trail, p. 465.
Henday - York Factory to the Blackfeet country, p. 339. This author remarks upon the discipline enforced by these officers.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

Grinnell's "soldiers" were presumably in the same category. Thompson's description of them, the earliest we have, is worth quoting: "In every large camp the Chiefs appoint a number of young men to keep peace and order in the camp; in proportion to its size; these are called Soldiers, they are all young men lately married or are soon to be married, they have a Chief and are armed with a small wooden club. They have a great power and force obedience to the Chiefs."(1) This likewise savours of an age-grouping: and although this author is describing a Peigan society, is it possible that the "small wooden club" is an attribute of all such Blackfoot societies, and that from which the Siksika organization has derived its name? According to Wissler's information on the point no Peigan society had a monopoly of police duty, "but all of these containing able-bodied men were likely to be called upon by the head men to guard the camp for a stated period. For any occasion the chief would call upon one or two of the societes instead of calling in individuals. The Pigeons, Mosquitos, All-brave-dogs and Braves were the ones most often called. During the summer when the tribal camp was formed preparatory to the Sun Dance, the societies were almost constantly on duty. While on the march, the van, flanks, and rear were each screened by a society acting under the orders of leaders. When in camp at night one or two were assigned to stand guard and enforce the camp regulations. This also applied to the buffalo hunt."(2)

Crime and Punishment

Thompson found that the Plains Indians considered theft, treachery and murder to be crimes.(3) To this list Grinnell adds cowardice.(4) As has already been noted, the penalty for murder was death at the hands of the victim's family, or clan; in order to avoid this fate, the murderer, his family or his clan could make a heavy property payment, at the option of the deceased's relatives, but the damages might be so overwhelming as to leave the murderer destitute.(1) If Henry is to be credited, the Bloods had the least respect for human life of all these tribes. They were "always inclined to mischief and murder."(2) Franklin blamed the Assiniboine for corrupting in this respect other tribes with whom they came in contact.(3)

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 358.

(2) Wissler - Societies of the Plains Indians, p. 370.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 236.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 220; B.

Stolen property had to be returned, but otherwise theft was left unpunished. The Peigans received from Henry a doubtful compliment when he wrote that they were "not so much given to thieving at our houses as the Blackfeet and Bloods."(4) No doubt, when compared with the Assiniboine they were all amateurs.

Treachery, including the giving of any form of aid to an enemy, was punishable by death at sight.(1) A proven coward was obliged to wear women's clothes and not allowed to marry.(5)

Direct punishment was apparently in favour for certain major crimes at least. Inquiries as to what would be done with a persistent or incorrigible delinquent brought forth the answer that such an individual would be shot, or sometimes, burned alive,(6) but there was no unanimity on the point.(7) If a father could not control his son, he finally turned him over to the council and reported his failure. The responsiblity for disciplining the man then rested with the chiefs.(6)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 220; B.

(2) Henry & Thompson - New light on the early history of the Greater Northwest, p. 530.

(3) Franklin - Narrative of a journey to the shores of the Polar Seas in the years 1819-20, 21-22, I, p. 161.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 530.

(6) B.

(7) D., E. and F. denied the assertion of B. who was, nevertheless, the most trustworthy informant of the four.

But more frequently, the force of public opinion was brought to bear upon offenders. "For mild persistent misconduct, a method of formal ridicule is sometimes practiced. When the offender has failed to take hints and suggestions, the head men may take formal notice and decide to resort to discipline. Some evening when all are in their tipis, a head man will call out to a neighbour asking if he has observed the conduct of Mr. A. This starts a general conversation between the many tipis, in which all the grotesque and hideous features of Mr. A.'s acts are held up to general ridicule amid shrieks of laughter, the grilling continuing until far into the night. The mortification of the victim is extreme and usually drives him into temporary exile, or, as formerly, upon the warpath to do desperate deeds."(1)

Property

To the Blackfoot, the idea of rights in land was utterly foreign.(2) The tribe as a whole, it was agreed, had a right to the territory it inhabited, as a means of support. But there was no idea of territorial subdivisions among smaller units or among individuals,(3) except that, following out the logic of tribal custom, the clan was held to have a right to the land which it happened to occupy at the moment. It should be pointed out that even these territorial rights had nothing whatever to do with the land itself but merely conferred the right to hunt over the land and use its produce. For non-agricultural people the land could have no value; only the game and other foods it produced were useful.

As it was the result of the combined effort of all members of the community, so the buffalo-pound seems to have been the property of the group which constructed it, though we may be sure, only so long as it was utilized. As in the case of territory, title lapsed with disuse.

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(1) Wissler - Social organization, p. 24.

(2) See Gilmore - Some Indian ideas of property, pp. 137-44.
Grinnell - Tenure of land among the Indians.

(3) Harmon - A journal of voyages and travels, pp. 330-1.

For the sake of convenience, we may call ownership of the above type communal, i.e., it resided in a group rather than in an individual.

Certain things belonged to special groups. The lodges, for instance, of the various societies belonged to the organizations rather than to individuals. Grinnell mentions objects belonging to the Brave Society.(1) Medicine bundles seem not to have belonged to individuals, though they had nominal possession of them. They were rather tribal or society property, upon the existence and proper manipulation of whose contents depended the welfare of the tribe. The same holds true for beaver bundles.(2) A certain Blackfoot, still living, had the temerity to sell, without the consent of the people, a famous beaver bundle. He soon discovered that he had made an improper, if not illegal, transaction, and has never since regained his former influence and prestige. Though the beaver and medicine bundles were thus bought and sold by private persons, their transfer was hedged about with custom to such an extent that ownership was strictly limited. Nevertheless the possession, or custody of a bundle conferred "great social, religious and even political" distinction.(3)

Another form of property was that of the tobacco plantation upon which the sacred tobacco was raised for the Tobacco Society.(4) Very little is known of this organization, but it can be said definitely that its members co-operated in clearing the ground, sowing, cultivating and harvesting the plant, to the accompaniment of a long ritual. It may be objected that such property was not communal, since each member had his own plot within the plantation, but the effort and the ceremonial were collectively performed, giving to the entire performance a communal aspect.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 223.

(2) Wissler - Blackfoot bundles, pp. 152 & 172.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 152.

(4) Cocking - Matthew Cocking's journal, p. 109, is the first to mention this institution; his brief description is remarkably accurate, as far as it goes.

As among the Assiniboine, articles made by an individual were considered to be his personal property.(1) Thus weapons were naturally a man's possessions, and cooking utensils and lodges were the property of women.(2) Clothes, of course belonged to the wearer. Besides the above, a man owned his painted robes, parfleches, saddles and horses. And in addition to the necessaries of her calling, a wife owned the windbreaker inside the lodge, her ornaments, horses, saddles, or in aboriginal times, her dogs,(3) and travois. Members of both sexes owned their peculiar and personal medicines and charms, which, having a high barter-value, must be considered in the light of valuable possessions.

Property among the Blackfeet may be divided into the same categories of derivation as Denig uses for the Assiniboine, i.e., articles (a) made by themselves, (b) found, (c) stolen from enemies, (d) given to them, or (e) bought.(1) "These were possessed in varying degree by the individual members of a tribe but in no case was the amount of such property given much weight in the determination of social position ... Amongst most tribes the lavish giving away of property was a sure road to social distinction."(4) The Blackfeet were such a tribe as Wissler here describes. Thompson informs us that the Peigans never gambled anything belonging to their wives or children,(5) such as the tipi, the kettle "as it cooks the meat of the children, and the axe as it cuts the wood to keep them warm," and the "dogs and horses of the women." But anyone "in need of food, horses, or anything whatsoever, was certain to receive some material assistance from those who had in abundance."(4)

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(1) Denig - Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri, p. 474.
Wissler - Social organization, p. 27.

(2) See Skinner - Notes on the Plains Cree, p. 83, where it is said that amongst the Cree the man owned the lodge.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 361; B.

(4) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 103.

(5) Thompson - op. cit. p. 361.

Indeed, food should always be set before a guest.(1) And a visitor, "if from a distance, should receive presents from the host and his relatives ... This is, however, a kind of exchange, since his relatives are expected to do likewise when visited by those befriending him."(1)

When a man died certain of his belongings were buried with him. The remainder was "raided by the relatives. The older sons usually take the bulk but must make some concessions to all concerned. If the children are young the father's relatives take the property."(2) A few horses were given to his brothers. If he had no sons, all the property went to his brothers; and if he lacked brothers, it passed to the nearest male relative on the father's side.(3)

A widow got nothing, and was fortunate if she could retain her horses, and their offspring, though she was allowed to keep her personal property. When a wife died, her belongings usually passed on to her daughters, if she had any, but otherwise they reverted to her relatives. Wills were, of course, formerly verbal only, and not always respected. Widows with a large number of relatives were seldom imposed upon, however.(4)

A tendency toward communal property may be inferred from the above remarks. This form of tenure applied, as has been shown, to land, (or should we say, to the products of the land), and to the results of community enterprise. It was extended in theory always, and in practice when need arose, to include the individual's right to food and shelter. Special cases of outright group-ownership existed, and certain categories of property which were believed to have a bearing on public welfare (medicine bundles, and the like) were semi-communal. That is, they were owned temporarily by individuals, and were subject to transfer, but since the tribe was concerned in their safe preservation, the individual's rights in them were limited. Private property was confined to personal requisites; and in this regard the Blackfoot was a strict individualist. Property in human beings did not exist except insofar as marriageable females possessed a purchase-value.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 103.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 26.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 26-7.

In prehistoric times, the accumulation of wealth brought with it no social advantages. The owner of a hundred dogs was not on that account more esteemed than the owner of one. Wealth might however, be used to acquire influence if the owner were willing to be generous enough to ingratiate himself by means of largesses to all and sundry, a tendency to which the advent of the horse gave great impetus.

Inheritance was usually in the male line, although daughters inherited from their mothers, and failing the issue of daughters a wife's personal property reverted to her relatives, if they were influential enough to claim it. This persistence of interest on the part of a wife's relatives in her original dower illustrates the strength of the private property concept among the Blackfeet.

The Status of Women

Though a man might marry several times, the procedure outlined in a previous chapter was gone through only in the case of the first wife. She was called his "sits-beside-him-woman"; her place was on his right-hand side, "while the others have their places near the doorway." It was her duty to direct the others in their work, and to attend to her husband's welfare. In fact, it is said that she was regarded very much as a "queen".(1) She alone had the leisure to tattoo the face, or to sit around dressed in her best clothes; she was given only the choicest of food.(1) At informal gatherings she was allowed "to take a whiff at the pipe, as it passed around the circle, and to participate in the conversation."(2) If such a privileged position occasioned internal dissention or jealousy, the offender was quietly turned out of the tipi by her husband.(1) A man might depose the head wife "and confer the right upon another; but such was regarded as unusual, except where the provocation was great."(1) Technically, she was his mate; she alone usually accompanied him on journeys; she took the woman's part in the transfer of bundles, and afterwards cared for them. Her marriage obligations seemed to be stricter than those of the younger women, who were assumed to have liaisons in spite of a formal prohibition against them.(1)

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(1) B.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

The Blackfeet took as many wives as they wished or could support; Grinnell heard of one who had sixteen wives. No woman, however could have more than one husband.(1) A man of importance would be expected to have at least two wives; Grinnell says that "In the old days, it was a very poor man who did not have three wives. Many had six, eight, and some more than a dozen,"(2) but the consensus of opinion seems to favour three as the customary number for an influential man.(3) It may be that Grinnell followed the statement of Henry that "many of them have six or seven wives."(4) Wissler believes that five was an unusual number of wives.(1)

The tendency was to marry sisters, if possible, since it was thought that they quarrelled less than strangers, being so long accustomed one to another.(4) Parents also preferred this arrangement, since it avoided the necessity of having several sons-in-law; they liked to see their daughters marry a man with other wives because their tasks would therefore be made easier. The arrangements in secondary marriages were very simple, the man apparently merely giving a certain number of horses in exchange. According to Grinnell, "if the man had proved a good, kind husband to his first wife, other men, who thought a good deal of their daughters, might propose to give them to him, so that they would be well treated,"(5) the exchange of a few horses, of course, taking place.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 11.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

(3) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 94.
Jenness - op. cit. p. 156.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

The reasons for the existence of polygamy have been so well summed up by McClintock(1) that it seems necessary merely to mention them here. The multifarious duties of a camp were too much for a single wife to perform efficiently, and servants were not commonly employed. The greater a chief, the greater the liberality expected of him. The means of liberality only came through personal exertion on his part and, therefore, the maintenance of a somewhat large household. Again, the constant wars depleted the ranks of men, leaving a surplus of women. Lastly, a man's ability and wealth were gauged in a large measure by the number of women he could support.(2) Though it does not cover all the reasons for the existence of polygamy, Thompson's note on the subject is so lucid and pointed as to make it worth quoting at length. "Polygamy" he writes "is allowed and practiced, and the Wife more frequently than her husband (is) the cause of it, for when a family comes a single wife can no longer do the duties and perform the labour required unless she, or her husband, have two widowed relatives in their tent, ... and a second Wife is necessary, for they have to cook, take care of the meat, split, dry it; procure all the wood for fuel, dress the skins into soft leather for robes and clothing; which they also have to make and mend, and other duties which leaves scarce any part of the day to be idle, and in removing from place to place the taking down of the tents and putting them up are all performed by the women. Some of the Chiefs have from three to six wives, for until a woman is near fifty years of age, she is sure to find a husband."(3)

Apparently, however, the women did not always regard the polygamous state favourably for Thompson says that "Every year there (are) some runaway matches between the young men and women; these are almost wholly from the hatred of the young women to polygamy ... In this case the affair is often made up, and the parents of the young woman are more pleased, than otherwise; yet it sometimes ends fatally."(4)

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(1) McClintock - op. cit. pp. 190-1.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 350.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 353.

It might be well to note here that a father's word was law concerning the time at which a daughter should marry; she might be beaten or even killed by him if she refused to obey him. As a result, girls often committed suicide by hanging, either because they were forced to marry a man against their will or because they could not have the man of their choice.(1)

The Blackfeet recognized a peculiar relationship between a married man and certain of his female relations and acquaintances, known as the "potential wife relationship". A wife's sisters were considered to be "potential wives" of her husband,(2) that is, he seemed to have a prior claim to them. They might not marry any other man without his consent,(3) though the husband himself was not compelled to take them.(4) Likewise a younger brother's widows were also a man's potential wives.(5) The case which Thompson saw and described so well was doubtless one in which the husband had felt obliged to accept the responsiblity for the welfare of his deceased chum's wives.(6) The sisters of a wife, and the wives of a man's brothers and chums were regarded as his "distant wives",(7) which implies that they were his wives in theory, though not in practise. Practical expression was given to this relationship in jesting; a man, on meeting a distant wife was expected "to engage in bold and obscene jests concerning sexual matters. This is often carried to a degree beyond belief,"(7) a behaviour which was carefully controlled in the presence of other women.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

(2) Wissler - Social organization, p. 12.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 217.
Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 13.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 217.

(4) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 13.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

(6) Thompson - op. cit. p. 351.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 12.

Indians frequently offered the early travellers their wives, usually for a consideration; a procedure over which Henry waxes indignant.(1) We know that occasionally "intimate friends of a young man about to marry would ask for the loan of his wife after marrying," but the request was usually turned down through the influence of her people.(1) Probably it was the rule also to loan wives to travellers in the country as a matter of courtesy, as is done by Eskimo and other natives. But according to Wissler, the first or head wife was never thus abused; the secondary wives were often captives, "violated by a war party before becoming members of a household" who could be "loaned by their masters without exciting public dissent;"(2) which throws a new light on Henry's observations. Had Henry discussed the subject with Thompson, that explorer would probably have explained to him that "the Indians of the Plains did not regard the chastity of their wives as a moral law, but as an inalienable right of property to be their wives and mothers of their children and not to be interfered with by another man."(3)

We have seen that an exchange of presents took place between contracting families, and that the bridegroom's family were always careful to give more than they had received. It seems certain that the idea of purchase is present, since in the case of runaways or divorce, the husband can "demand the price paid for her."(4) On the other hand, if it were a runaway match in which no presents were exchanged, the parents might take the wife back and give her to someone else.(5) Ordinarily, the man felt he could do as he pleased with his wife since he "paid enough for her."(6) He "could beat his wife, or, of course, kill her, but," as Grinnell very truly remarks, "he could not sell her to another man."(1) The viewpoint of the husband was well noted by M'Gillivray who writes: "From the moment an Indian purchases his wife from her father, he regards her in the same light as any other part of his property, entirely at his disposal, possessing the power of life and death over her, with no other restrictions than the resentment of her relatives, which if he is a brave Indian gives him little concern."(2)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 11.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 236.
See Denig - op. cit. p. 482.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 9-10.

(5) This information obtained among the Blackfeet corresponds exactly with that obtained by Wissler from the Peigan.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.

The legal status of the wife, in brief, seems to have been that of a personal chattel, not subject to sale, but in every other respect, the absolute property of the husband, so long as he was strong enough morally and physically to maintain the contract. Morally, because gross abuse or misconduct on his part might prompt her people to rescue her; physically, because it often depended upon the relative strength of the two parties whether the wife's people dared to try to take her from an undesirable husband.(3)

Apparently no marriage was considered a real one until a child had been born, for until this event occurred, divorce was frequent.(4) But after the birth of a child divorce was uncommon. From the man's standpoint, the reasons for divorce were laziness and adultery.(5) The usual procedure was merely to turn the woman out of doors; she then went back to her people who sheltered her till another husband could be found; if she married again the first husband was certain to demand back the price he paid for her.(6) If the husband were cruel or neglectful, the woman might desert him; in this case, the husband's family "opens negotiations with her relatives and an attempt at adjustment is made. The woman's family usually agrees to another trial, but may finally decide to find her another husband. Then her husband demands a settlement and is entitled to equivalent return for what he gave at marriage."(1) Under these circumstances, divorce was so ruinously expensive as to make it a case of last resort.(1) A woman was, then, little more than a chattel. All her life, she "was subject to some one's orders, either parent, relative, or husband."(2) Until she was married, a girl enjoyed her greatest freedom; even then she was closely watched by her mother and old women.(3) Once married, she became pretty much a slave. Henry called them "mere slaves",(4) "who stood in awe of their husbands,"(5) and Harmon noticed that the men "treat their wives much as they do their dogs. The men chastise their wives, frequently with an axe, or with a large club, and in the presence of their husbands, the women dare not look a person in the face."(6)

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 217.

(2) M'Gillivray - Manuscript journal, p. 33.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 13-14.
M'Gillivray - op. cit. p. 33.

(4) Jenness - op. cit. p. 156. See Smith - J.B. Trudeau's remarks on the Indians of the Upper Missouri, p. 566; "A young Indian seldom lives long with his first wife. This is so much the case, that by the time he is thirty years old he has perhaps cohabited with ten different women and abandoned them."

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 14.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 13-14.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 218.

If a girl brought shame on her family, she alone received the blame.(7) A wife must strictly observe her marriage obligations, but the husband recognized none, of the sexual order.(8) If she were caught in adultery, she might well tremble. The least punishment she could expect would be to be turned back in deep shame to her people as an outcast. Her husband might so mutiliate her by lopping off her ears or, more usually, her nose, by the simple process of biting if a knife were not handy, as to render her less attractive in future. Sometimes she was given the choice of mutilation or instant death; if her husband failed to carry out the penalty, her own people would do so to save "the family name."(1) The husband seems to have preferred to have it thus, since if he assumed the responsiblity, and had not completed the payments for his wife, her parents might interfere.(2) Grinnell states that a society sometimes carried out the punishment.(3) Even for a suspected but unproven lapse from grace, the wife was in the same dire peril, especially if she were the consort of an important man. But the worst possible punishment was to be turned over to all the male members of the clan, who debauched the erring one "in the most shocking manner and turned her out of doors to become a prostitute."(4)

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 14.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 219.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 8.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

(5) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(6) Harmon - op. cit. pp. 297-8.

(7) Wissler - op. cit. p. 9.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

Yet Grinnell assures us that "On the whole ... women who behaved themselves were well treated and received a good deal of consideration."(3) Curtis goes so far as to say that the wife of an adulterous man "could protest to his father, who would remonstrate with his erring son. If that accomplished nothing, she would report the matter to her own father, who might advise her to return to her own family; and if she did so, the goods given with her were demanded back."(5) Probably a brave woman could maintain her rights for M'Gillivray tells us that "a few of the other sex wear the breeches."(6)

On the other hand, a woman "is obliged to take charge of all the drudgery which occurs in the domestic affairs of the family. She is continually employed in drawing water, conveying wood, searching for horses, and every other kind of employment which the husband thinks below the dignity of a warrior, and when she has the misfortune to incur his displeasure for any neglect of duty or want of respect she is certain to experience the brutal effects of his resentment."(1) In another passage the same author remarks as follows: "Indeed the barbarous treatment of women among the Savages of this Country, it can scarcely be expected they should have any great degree of affection towards their tyrants, or that they should be much affected at their death, especially as the Widow enjoys a much greater degree of freedom than the married woman notwithstanding the intercourse between the sexes is not much restrained, besides, if the former is inclined to enter again into the matrimonial state, she may choose for herself and select for a partner the man whom her heart prefers -- at any rate her usefulness in managing the domestic affairs and performing every other drudgery to which her condition subjects her, will be sufficient recommendation to procure her a husband whenever she desires it."(2) It is doubtful just how true it is that a widow is free to marry again as she wished. As has been shown, they became the potential wives of the deceased husband's oldest brother, in which case the exercise of their own will depending on his pleasure. And in any event, if her father was living, she would likely be subject to his disposal, just as in her younger days.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. p. 10.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 10 & 14.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 216.

(4) Wissler - op. cit. p. 11.

(5) Curtis - op. cit., XVIII, p. 181.

(6) M'Gillivray - op. cit. p. 33.

In the last analysis the position of the Blackfoot woman was not an enviable one. Never free to exercise her own will, she had all the labour and responsibility of the camp. Like all other Plains folk, "When they decamp, the women transport the baggage, and when they stop, while the men are quietly smoking their pipes, the women are required to pitch the tents, and to set the encampment in order."(3) The coming of the horse must have been a boon to them, for Cocking remarked that it gave "their Women a great advantage over the other Women who are either carrying or hauling on Sledges every day in the year."(4)

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(1) M'Gillivray - op. cit. p. 33.

(2) M'Gillivray - op. cit. pp. 60-1.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 298.

(4) Cocking - op. cit. p. 111.

Captives and Slavery

Women and children taken in war were usually retained by their captives. In fact, "they labour to take as many of their (the enemy's) women and children alive, as they possibly can, in order to carry them home as slaves."(1) This was fairly general on the Plains; specific mention being made of the custom among the Siksika,(2) the Assiniboine,(3) and the Crow.(4)

Broadly speaking, a captive's lot was not an especially hard one. The women suffered the usual fate of female prisoners everywhere. But this did not prevent their being subsequently taken as wives by men who could afford to keep them as additions to their households.(5) Such women, if they were taken as second wives, were never considered of equal rank with a man's first wife; for instance, they could be loaned without loss of respect to their master. Wissler suggests that it was such women as these who aroused Henry's disgust.(6) In a general way, however, their lot was probably very little different from that of other women in the tribe. Though we do not quite agree in view of Wissler's opinion on the subject, that captive women possessed "all the rights and privileges of indigenous members" as Grinnell states,(7) it is nevertheless safe to assume that they were "used with kindness",(8) on a par with other members of the household.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 308.

(2) Henday - op. cit. p. 339.
Cocking - op. cit. p. 112.

(3) Henry - Travels and experiences in Canada, p. 312.
Henday - op. cit. p. 347.

(4) Lowie - The Crow Indians, p. 229.

(5) Wissler - op. cit. p. 11.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 308.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 254; B. and E.

(6) Wissler - op. cit. p. 11.
Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 254.

(8) Cocking - op. cit. p. 112.

Child captives, boys and girls indifferently, were almost certain to be adopted "into the families of those who have lost their children, either by War or sickness,"(1) when they were "treated with all the tenderness and affection which could be exercised toward a near relative."(2) It is said that such a child might be returned upon the request of his rightful parents after he had learned the language, though he could remain if he chose with his foster parents.(3) This is interesting in the light of Thompson's statement about Peigans going off to learn foreign languages in order to acquire increased prestige.(4) Or again, they might be exchanged for other prisoners, for horses or for goods, which amounts to saying they might be ransomed.(5)

The question of slavery among the Blackfeet may profitably be disposed of here. Cocking uses the term "slave"(1) in positive connection with the Siksika, apparently with the connotation of "prisoner" or "captive"; Harmon uses it in its customary sense in referring to the Plains Indians in general,(2) and a few pages farther on in the same sense as Cocking. Henday mentions two girls who were given as slaves "as presents" to a leader of a hunt.(6) It is therefore difficult to draw any valuable inferences from their statements. The standard definition of a slave is a "person who is the legal property of another or others and is bound to absolute obedience, human chattel." Henry, we believe, uses the term correctly and deliberately when he referred to Siksika(7) and Peigan women.(8) The whole ideology of marriage among the Blackfeet proves the chattleship of women. It was actual, and for the single purpose of marriage, it was utilized. A bride had to be paid for, and after her marriage she had to obey her husband. But the idea was never carried to its logical conclusion. He could not sell her to someone else, nor indeed, could he demand his purchase price back if he were dissatisfied with his bargain. He acquired just enough wives to perform the necessary duties of his lodge; too many readily became a liability -- and one which had to be fed and clothed. It is true that such a state of affairs constituted a very real slavery in the accepted sense of the word, but a slavery within extremely narrow and well-defined limits. To be a slave under the existing circumstances was much preferable to being a free unmarried woman. Captive women taken as second wives could therefore no more be considered slaves than the first wife.(1)

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(1) Cocking - op. cit. p. 112.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 308.

(3) B.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. p. 366.

(5) A. and E.

(6) Henday - op. cit. p. 340.

(7) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 526.

(8) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724.

The concept of male slavery was completely foreign to these people. Their society was classless and there was no incentive to the accumulation of private property -- the two prerequisites to the beginning of slavery. Male prisoners could not be sold for gain; neither could they be put to profitable employment. There was no machinery for subjecting them to discipline, and uncontrolled, they were a menace to life and limb. Therefore they were killed. Women, on the other hand, were politically inactive and had a utilitarian value which made it worthwhile to retain them.

In conclusion, we may say that a benign form of female slavery existed, into which captive women were readily fitted; but no slavery of the grosser and more inhuman types was known or practiced by the Blackfeet; nor did the existing type permit of class distinctions.

War

"As I have already observed, warlike exploits are their (the Peigans') great pride."(2) The same could be said of the entire confederacy. For "Considerably outnumbering the majority of tribes with which they came in contact, they were naturally arrogant and brave in their confidence."(1) If nothing else did so, the struggle for existence made war necessary to most Plains tribes and the Blackfeet were no exception. Constant external pressure had to be resisted if territory was to be held and food kept within sight. These people, however, had the advantage over other tribes of being more numerous and more prosperous and their arrogance, induced by a consciousness of their strength, no doubt gave rise to many raids. "War is more familiar to them than to other nations, and they are by far the most formidable to the common enemy of the whole,"(2) indeed, "the principal occupation of the Slaves is war."(3) Aside altogether from the warfare necessitated by the struggle for existence, we find it arising from several discrete causes. According to Henry, "War, women, horses and buffalo are all their (the Bloods') delights, and all these they have at command."(4) War is thus seen to be a pastime; in fact, among the Plains tribes it became almost a game with precise regulations, moves, honours and rewards. The greatest honour was derived from touching an emeny or claiming "coup";(5) the second to take his weapons;(6) the third to kill him, and the last, probably, to take his scalp.(7) A man's coups were a matter for relating on all important public occasions and for painting on one's lodge.(8) Similarly did scalping lend prestige.(1) These social advantages to be gained are most likely what old social advantages to be gained are most likely what old informants meant when they said Blackfeet often went to war "to get their name up."(1)

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 724. This may not have been true for the Assiniboine. See Henday - op. cit. p. 347 and Henry - op. cit. p. 312.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 731.

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(1) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 9.

(2) Umfreville - Present state of Hudson's Bay, p. 200.

(3) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 529.

(4) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 737.

(5) Grinnell - Scalp and coup among the Plains Indians, p. 296.

(6) According to F., this was the greatest honour.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 296-7, and 303.

(8) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, pp. 246-50.
McClintock - op. cit. p. 519.

No doubt Henry was also right in assigning women as the cause of many a raid.(2) But, even more productive of trouble, was the custom of setting off for war in order to assuage grief. If a father lost a cherished son, whether from natural causes or at the hands of enemies, whether a mere infant or a full-grown youth, he might either gather together a few followers and set out, or take to the warpath alone.(3) In inviting companions the bereaved parent visited a neighbour in his tipi and offered him a pipe to smoke. A day was then set and moccasins prepared.(4) The idea seems either to have been one of revenge, or else to provide a spirit-companion for his son's soul, though hardly, as Harmon says as an offering to his manes.(5) In this connection it is worth noting that, if a man were killed on a raid, another war-party would likely be organized to avenge that death.(6)

But by far the most fruitful source of war, in historic times, has been the lust for horses. As Grinnell observes, horses became the wealth of the Plains tribes, the medium which would buy all that they did not already possess. Even in Umfreville's time, they were noted as being the "principal inducement in going to war."(7) Later, horse-stealing became "almost a synonym for war."(8)

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(1) A. and C.

(2) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 737.

(3) Wissler - op. cit. p. 31.
Denig - op. cit. p. 470.

(4) A., C. and D.

(5) Harmon - op. cit. p. 309.

(6) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 9.
Wissler - Material culture of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 155.

(7) Umfreville - op. cit. p. 200.

(8) Wissler - op. cit. p. 155.
See also Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 737.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 309.
Denig - op. cit. p. 407.

As a state of war was a normal condition, tribesmen could not go far wrong if they spent their spare time in winter in preparing for it by making weapons.(1) Spring and summer were the favourite seasons for raids,(2) though they might be undertaken at any time.(1) If occasion for war arose, the man desiring to initiate it seems first to have smoked his pipe with the chief to obtain his permission or consent. This won, he was free to invite his friends to join him.(3) Mention is made also of prospective young warriors visiting an old man to obtain his blessing. The old man smoked the proferred pipe, blessed his supplicant and in return received some of the spoils of the raid.(4) These preliminaries over, recruits were solicited. As Grinnell observes, the readiness with which men volunteered to join a leader depended upon the reputed strength of his "medicine",(5) and an old man observed that it "depended on a warrior's popularity how many followers he had."(6) Probably five or ten was the usual number, though it might be as low as two or as high as a hundred.(7) A man going to war to assuage grief might even start out alone; on the other hand Thompson says Kootenae Appe, a Peigan of renown, "seldom took the field with less than two hundred men but frequently with many more." Grinnell mentions a battle between the Peigans and the allied Crows and Gros Ventre in which 450 of the enemy were said to have been killed.(8) These figures however are not irreconcilable, for small bands were preferred for horse raids and general forays(1) but major engagements naturally demanded greater numbers.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 306.

(2) Harmon - op. cit. p. 306; B., D. and F.

(3) E. Apparently the elaborate procedure outlined in Harmon - op. cit. pp. 306-7, was not Blackfoot.

(4) D.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 250.

(6) A paraphrase of a statement by E. He mentions 100 as the normal number while A. thought 15 or 20 more usual.

(7) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 9.

(8) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 245.

When a leader announced his intention of going to war, his wife and female relatives began to make moccasins for him to take; his older male relatives provided him with weapons, and his followers' relatives did the same for them.(2) The obedience accorded a leader of Plains Indians is very well described by Tanner when he speaks of the Crees: "It is true that ordinarily they yield a certain deference and a degree of obedience to the chief each may have chosen to follow, but this obedience, in most instances, continues no longer than the will of the chief corresponds with the inclination of those he leads."(3) Outstanding leaders such as Kootenae Appe owed their renown to one or other of the attributes of genius, personal prowess, or a mere reputation for good luck. This particular individual seems to have possessed all these and to have been a shrewed politician into the bargain.(4)

The leader set the time for the start.(5) Just before starting out the "peeling-a-stick-song" was sung, a sweat-lodge built; the warriors entered it, together with an old man who smoked and prayed for good luck; they cut bits of skin from their arms and bodies which they offered to the Sun; then emerged and plunged into the river.

Usually they marched by day except when nearing enemy territory, or when they would be conspicuous on open prairie. The older men carried only their weapons and the boys the luggage, which consisted chiefly of moccasins, clothing, "medicines" and food. As the food was pemmican usually, animals killed on the way were a welcome diversion, and eased out the supply. Water may have been carried in leather containers, but informants deny that the water from a buffalo paunch was ever drunk.(1)

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 347.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 250.

(3) Tanner - A narrative of the captivity and adventures of John Tanner, p. 205. There were no recognized war-chiefs such as Harmon - op. cit. p. 309, describes.

(4) Thompson - op. cit. pp. 346-7.

(5) This account is based on Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 250-4.

When possible, camp was pitched in a woods; if the weather necessitated it, a "war-lodge" was built by arranging young trees with the leaves on, like poles in a tipi, with the butts up. The leaves shed the rain and concealed the fire within. When hard pressed, a raiding party might take refuge in a pit, natural or artificial,(2) shooting out of crevices when possible.(3) In stormy weather on the open plains a shelter of rocks would be built,(4) or in winter, houses of snow blocks, in which a fire of buffalo chips might be lighted.(5) Wissler says that these shelters were kept in constant repair.(2)

Scouts were sent out to reconnoitre. Rivers were crossed on rafts. The first to cross stripped and swam over with his clothes tied on his head. Arrived on the opposite bank, he prepared a fire for those about to cross. The latter put their clothes on a raft, which four swimmers towed across by means of ropes held in their teeth. When they landed the fire was already prepared and no ill resulted.(6)

In attacking, the warriors crept close to the lodges, and a number of braves selected by the leader cut the horses loose, or fell upon the inmates according to the object of the raid. The horses were driven off, slowly at first, then at top speed. Pitched battles were doubtless very rare, although there must certainly have been some of this type.

A slain Blackfoot was "covered" with all the dead enemies but one, which was reserved for a scalp dance. This procedure seems to have rendered compensation for the loss. When an enemy was killed, he was scalped, and often his hands, feet, or even his head, were cut off, sometimes while still alive.(1) Grinnell thinks this was done in retaliation for the death of one of the attackers. The corpse might be dragged to the home camp for the amusement of the children, upon which they could count coup, or it might be that only a member would be taken for a dance trophy.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 279; G.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 155.

(3) F.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 252.
See Wissler - op. cit. p. 155.

(5) A., C. and D.

(6) D.

The ceremonial side of war is hinted at in an informant's statement that before killing an emeny, a man regulated his actions according to his dream-formula; thus A. might be required to point north, east, south, west, up and down before shooting, according to the directions he had received in his dream.(2)

Passing over the scene of actual warfare, in which "wild Indians" hung precariously on the sides of their chargers in order to shield themselves from the enemy, we may touch upon the subject of peace negotiations. The description is based on that of an old informant, and while more satisfactory, corroborates Harmon's.(3) It is reasonable to suppose that there was a uniform method of initiating peace between the tribes of the Plains culture-province. When one side had had enough of battle, its members shouted "Oh-oh-oh", upon which the enemy ceased fighting. A warrior took a feather, sweet-grass and some tobacco across and offered it to the leader. Then all smoked the pipe together except those who wished to continue the war. In order to bring unreasonable individuals who wished to prolong the battle to their senses, the chief continued to pass the pipe until they gave way and accepted it. The opposing leaders then set out for the enemy camp, meeting in the no-man's-land between. Here they sang their songs, and directed a large tipi to be built. In this all danced, sang, fraternized and exchanged presents. Each man selected one of his late enemies for a "friend" whom he henceforth regarded almost as a brother.(4) Of course, peace negotiations were only necessary in what might be termed wars, as distinct from raids, forays and sporadic attacks.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 254; F.

(2) D.

(3) Harmon - op. cit. p. 310.

(4) E.

Harmon's account of the return from an engagement, while not distinctive, is yet sufficiently in consonance with Blackfoot culture traits to merit its quotation in the absence of any other description. "On their return from an expedition", he writes, "the war party approach the tents of their band, with their faces blackened (the sign of victory) and singing the war song. Their relatives immediately make a feast, at which the warriors dance, with the scalps of their enemies which they have taken, in their hands; and recount the history of the expedition, particularly relating the manner in which they fell upon their enemy, the number of men that they killed, and of slaves, horses, etc., which they have taken. They then distribute a part of the booty, among the aged chiefs, and most respectable men of the tribe, who remained at home. The young men, who deserted the party, are treated with contempt, and the young women, whose charms may have attracted them back, frequently compose songs of derision, in regard to their behaviour."(1)

Scalps were trophies to be used in the Woman's dance, and often discarded after.(2) Henday, however, saw "a great many dried Scalps with fine, long black hair, displayed on poles, & before the Leader's tent."(3) Imitation scalps of buffalo or horse hair were, it is said, hung on poles as proof of valour.(4)

There is unanimity in agreement that male prisoners were killed,(5) probably being first subjected to torture. For Harmon writes that Plains Indians made "terrible havoc among the men"(6) and

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. pp. 308-9.

(2) Wissler - op. cit. p. 155.
Grinnell - Coup and scalp among the Plains Indians, p. 303.

(3) Henday - op. cit. p. 339.

(4) A.

(5) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 254.
Harmon - op. cit. p. 308; E.

(6) Harmon - op. cit. p. 308.

Henry avers that the "Slaves" were "excessively cruel to their enemies. I have heard of instances that chilled my blood with horror,"(1) and Henry's blood was not easily chilled.

Religion

As someone has said, if Blackfoot religion were to be explained faithfully in all its ramifications, the story of it would "present a complete exposition of Blackfoot thought, so extensively does religion enter into the affairs of everyday life."(2) To attempt such a task is not my present purpose, even if there were sufficient material at hand to make it worthwhile. As it is, however, information about Blackfoot religion is rather sketchy; for one reason, because it is difficult to obtain. Thompson was the first to observe that "to directly question them on their religion is of no use," though "persons who pass through the country often think the answers the Indians give is their real sentiments."(3) It apparently took over a century for anyone else to realize, or at least to put it in print, that in order to understand their theology it "is necessary to learn rather from the every-day life of the people and from their ceremonies, prayers and songs."(4) In view of the complexity of the subject, and the meagerness of the data, I shall attempt merely to discuss Blackfoot religion in its broader aspects, omitting the specific illustrations of experiences, visions, ceremonies and prayers which are so vital to a thorough comprehension of it. If I can convey some idea of the Blackfoot conception of deity, of immanence, and of the proper means of enlisting the favour and protection supernatural forces, it is all that can be hoped.

A close correspondence exists between the religion of the Blackfeet and the Crow Indians,(5) and between the Arapaho, a tribe kindred to the Crow(1) although the latter people belong to a different linguistic stock from the Blackfeet, and although the Blackfeet still retain many very definite connections with the religion of other Algonquian tribes,(2) the points of convergence make it worthwhile to keep the two constantly in mind. Fortunately the religion of the Crow has been fully treated by Dr. Lowie,(3) and his two papers on the subject should be interpreted as descriptive also of Blackfoot religion in general outlines, except for one or two important differences which will be discussed below.

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(1) Henry & Thompson - op. cit. p. 529.

(2) Wilson - The sacrificial rite of the Blackfeet, p. 3.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 361.

(4) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 64.

(5) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 155.

The highly organized and involved nature of the religion of western civilization, with its claims to authority in many spheres of thought and action, renders it difficult for us to comprehend that there can exist one from which morality is entirely divorced, and which touches only upon the things of this world. Yet such was the religion of the Blackfeet. For them the purpose of religion was not the solving of the riddle of the universe; not the salvation of the soul; not the regulation of personal conduct; not the adoration of a godhead. It was essentially a tool to be used to make one's progress through life a trifle easier; often a means to personal ascendancy; and its most important function the enlisting for the individual of the aid of the benevolent supernatural powers against the forces of nature and of evil.

The forces of nature are obviously destructive ones and, I believe, though I cannot prove it, are always in the back of an Indian's mind when he is about to perform any religious function. The Sun Dance, for instance, is a promise of a sacrificial return for the Sun's assistance in restoring a sick relative to health. Obviously, the destructive powers must be outbalanced, outwitted, or dealt with in whatever way is provided by the religious system. And so also with visions.

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(1) Radin - Religion of the North American Indian, p. 372.

(2) Grinnell - Blackfoot lodge tales, p. 257.

(3) Lowie - The Crow Indians, pp. 237-55.
Lowie - Primitive religion, pp. 1-32.
For certain other cultural similarities see Wissler - Diffusion of culture in the Plains of North America, p. 48.

A one-hundred willow sweat lodge frame.
(Photo by Kenneth Kidd, courtest of the National
Museums of Canada.)

This is probably an appropriate point at which to explain what the word "forces" connotes to the Blackfoot mind.(1) In the absence of all those arts which make possible metaphysical speculation, the Blackfoot was forced to rely upon his own reasoning powers in working out a philosophy, if we may call it such. Though he was guided in this by the tribal pattern, he was nevertheless an individualist. Looking about him, he saw that the water in the rivers flowed, the wind blew, the sun shone; the birds could fly and the animals outstripped himself in running, in strength and often in cunning. The placid rivers could rapidly become raging torrents; the wind could drive the blizzard against his lodge, the sun could dry up the vegetation with its heat. Obviously, the "forces" of nature possessed personalities of their own; and the rational step was to endow them all with spirits. Indeed, everything possessed life, potentially if not in fact. The blowing of the wind, the scorching heat of the sun, and the strength of animals were physical manifestations of the "power" of their spirits. Everything possessed power, but the power of such insignificant objects, say, as a gopher, a bee or a common stone were normally of small consequence. But the power of a chicken-hawk was great; the power of a buffalo was great; and the power of the Sun the greatest of all. Did not the Sun, in fact, regulate the very seasons, and thereby life itself?

These supernatural powers were in, and of, the world just as was the Indian. Their interest in his affairs could be enlisted, and they would even consent to help him. But it was necessary to know how to enlist their aid; and around this subject rituals of varying degrees of complexity were evolved. The ceremonies which grew out of this belief are the most striking in Blackfoot culture, though of course by no means peculiar to it. It is noteworthy, too, that even in the Sun Dance, the most complex of them all, the motivation was still essentially individual. Blackfoot religion was a personal one; there was no priesthood.

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(1) For an adequate description of native religion see Jenness - The Indians of Canada, pp. 167-84.

The enlisting of supernatural aid is the most conspicuous feature of Blackfoot religion. Prompted by the myths and personal anecdotes which he heard about the camp, every youth realized how necessary it was to his success that he should obtain the assistance of a supernatural.(1) No doubt specific desires usually prompted the quest. Wearing a minimum of clothes and taking only a buffalo robe for a cover by night, the youth repaired to some desolate spot, usually an elevation, where he prepared himself to have a vision.(2) He ate and drank little or nothing, probably inflicted self-torture, such as the offering of small portions of his skin, and prayed constantly by calling upon "all the recognized mythical creatures, the heavenly bodies, and all in the earth and in the waters"(3) to come to his aid. Considering the induced hallucinations, it was not remarkable that on the fourth day the supplicant saw what he anticipated.(4) Usually it was the spirit of an animal or bird which appeared in the vision, speaking to the supplicant either forthrightly or allegorically. Wissler seems to think that prayers offered are addressed to "an illy localized power or element manifest everywhere"(3) and that this "divine element" merely spoke through the creature seen in the vision. At any rate the latter became the guardian spirit of the visionary for the remainder of his life.(5) Were a hawk, for instance, to be seen in a vision, the supplicant would set about to obtain a specimen of that bird which he would carefully preserve and keep by him. The actual hawk was henceforth the symbol, or the visible manifestation, of the "power" which had consented to be his tutelary, and would be known henceforth as the owner's "medicine." As among the Crow, no species could "be ruled out as a possible source of power," or precluded "from the range of the mystically potent."(1)

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(1) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 154.

(2) McClintock - op. cit. p. 154.

(3) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, p. 112.

(4) For his psychology of the vision-quest, see Lowie - Primitive Religion, pp. 10-14.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 263.

It is worthwhile stressing the fact that such "medicines" were not fetishes, since the object itself was not worshipped, either for its magical properties, or for its being the habitation of the spirit: "without the special visions and contacts with the supernatural world that gave them validity,"(2) they were utterly senseless; if for some reason one's "medicine" failed it could safely be thrown away.

Medicines bestowed various attributes upon their owners. Certain ones rendered their possessors invulnerable to arrows, others gave them the power of curing disease and so forth, just as among the Crow. Those whose medicine made them outstanding individuals were the nearest approach to priests among the Blackfeet, but still their functions were purely personal and individual; the leaders of the Tobacco Society were probably the sole exception to this rule.

The potency of a medicine might be lost either through the possessor's carelessness in obeying the conditions orally given to him by the guardian spirit in the vision or through misinterpretation of the spirit's meaning. Once lost, it could not be restored. On the other hand, a medicine once obtained never lost its effectiveness as long as the conditions of its bestowal were obeyed. This led to their being transferred from one individual to another. The ritual buying and selling of medicine bundles, however, was not confined to the Blackfeet.(3) "Among the Blackfoot and Arapaho any blessing could be purchased, but it seems that great care was exercised that the purchaser be a suitable person. A strong religious feeling seems to have accompanied purchased blessings among the Blackfoot and Arapaho ... In both cases, however, the efficacy of the purchased blessings was due to the fact that originally they were obtained from the spirits in the proper way."(1) Incidentally, the origin of each bundle can be traced to a specific vision.

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(1) Lowie - The Crow Indians, p. 251.

(2) Jenness - op. cit. p. 176.

(3) Jenness - op. cit. pp. 177-8.

Returning for a moment to the subject which I can adequately describe only as a qualified animism, it may be worthwhile to set forth in more detail the creatures of the spirit world. As has been said, "Every animate thing, be it animal, bird or fish has a spirit and possesses supernatural strength, which it is advantageous for man to acquire."(2) These were collectively referred to as "Ground Persons".(3) "Bodies of water, particularly rivers with their dangerous rapids and whirlpools were believed to be the abode of malign spirits."(2) -- the "Under Water Persons" of whom Wind-maker is a good example.(3) Even peculiar natural formations, such as oddly shaped rocks etc., were regarded, either as possessed of supernatural attributes or as the abodes of spirits and it was the custom to leave offerings nearby whenever one had to pass them.(4) Certain anthropomorphic erosions visible along the C.P.R. line, west of Calgary, in Peigan country, known locally as "The Voodoos", are said still to be feared.(5) Still another category of spirits was called by the term "Above Persons", of whom Thunder was the most important.(3) The "Above Persons" and the "Under Water Persons" were either entirely fictitious creatures, such as Ground Man(3) or the personification of immaterial forces, such as Cold-maker who was supposed to bring the winter weather.(6) Less immaterial, but at the same time more awe-inspiring and important to the Blackfeet were the Sun, the Moon, the Morning-star and the Great Dipper. The Moon was regarded as wife of the Sun and the

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(1) Radin - op. cit. p. 372.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 64.

(3) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 259.

(4) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 262; Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 64.
See Harmon - op. cit. pp. 319-20.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 262-3, mentions several such places.

(6) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 260.

Morning-star their only surviving son.(1) The other children had all been killed by pelicans.

Everything was thus endowed with Being; all forms of life, striking natural formations, most natural phenomena, the sun, the moon, and the important constellations. It is to the Sun principally that the Blackfoot prayed, but it was seldom that the Sun answered prayer directly. More often it was a much inferior creature that appeared to a visionary as a helper. Usually it was some bird or animal -- a Ground Person in other words; Above Persons appeared less frequently and Under Water persons only rarely.

It should now be apparent that spirit was immanent everywhere in the world. Not only did all material forms possess it, but so also did well recognized "forces" such as the wind and the cold. The material remains of these became the means of communciation with the spirit itself. Thus a dried chicken-hawk was kept in a bundle, not to be worshipped *per se*, but because it had become an intermediary between the individual and the chicken-hawk spirit which seemed to be immanent everywhere. And so with a buffalo skull, a wolf bone or a beaver tooth. It was the spirit itself which was the helper. And any spirit could thus become a helper. They appeared in answer to prayer to the *Sun*. Thompson sensed this fact among the Peigans, when he said "They believe there are inferior Beings to the Great Spirit, under whose orders they act."(2) The Sun apparently transmitted a reply through some animal, usually a large and important one such as the buffalo, bear or beaver.(3)

It is interesting to inquire whether this is a case of pantheism. If the Sun was supreme, and the spirits merely so many manifestations of the "Great Spirit" which was the sun, then it is pantheism. If, however, the Sun was but one of the more important spirits, Blackfoot religion was not pantheistic but animistic. McClintock assures us that "All animals receive their endowment of power from the Sun, differing in degree, but the same in kind as that received by man and all things animate and inanimate."(1) Certain it was that "of the numerous objects of worship, the Sun is the one which receives the greatest adoration. More prayers are offered to this principal deity than to all the others combined, and the most important of the religious rites and ceremonies are devoted to him in particular."(2) It seems true that there "is a tendency here to conceive some all-pervading force or element in the universe that emanates from an indefinite source to which a special name is given, which in turn becomes an attribute applicable to each and every manifestation of this conceivably divine element."(3) The Sun was important enough to be addressed directly and personally,(4) and to be offered daily prayers.(5) Muntsch considers the evidence for belief in a supreme deity to be decisive,(6) and as the case stands we cannot disagree with him. Taken abstractly, it may be admitted that the Sun was the supreme deity; that he was, in the last analysis, all-powerful; that his relationships with the world were personal and that he was the only object of worship. Other things, such as iniskim,(7) might be intercessory spirits, which occasionally required offerings if their good-will was to be retained but their power was ultimately derived from the Sun. To this extent, Blackfoot religion was probably pantheism. But if the Sun was actually as important as some would lead us to believe it was not even a pantheism, but a true monotheism. Not enough, however, is known of the details of it to justify any conclusions on this point.

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(1) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 258.
Wissler - Star legends of the American Indians.

(2) Thompson - op. cit. pp. 362-3.

(3) McClintock - op. cit. p. 352.

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(1) McClintock - op. cit. p. 167.

(2) Wilson - op. cit. p. 3.
See also McClintock - op. cit. pp. 169-70; Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 154.

(3) Wissler - North American Indians of the Plains, pp. 110-11.

(4) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 64.

(5) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 263.

(6) Muntsch - Relations between religion and morality among the Plains Indians, p. 27.

(7) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 125.
These are Ammonites, or sections of Baculites, or even nodules of flint.

And moreover, it is not an important one; for, with the bias of our own experience, we are looking for a primacy which to the native was of extremely minor importance. So unimportant was it, indeed, that the Blackfoot constantly confused the Sun with Old Man, the culture-hero of the western Algonquian peoples, and the counterpart of Old Man Coyote among the Siouan tribes. Lowie has been at great pains to distinguish between these two deities among the Crow, and concluded that there was no "absolute ascendancy in the Crow universe."(1) Among the Blackfeet there was constant confusion of Natoas (Sun) and Napi (Old Man).(2) Now, Natoas was certainly recognized as a powerful deity, revered, and petitioned for all manner of blessings. It seems safe to say that he was a beneficent and exemplary god. Napi, on the contrary, was an impish, and often immoral rascal, no better than an average man, and often much worse. Yet he was more or less consistently credited with the creation of the world and all that is in it, as the mythology bears out. Obviously, if Napi created the world he created the sun too, which would give him pre-eminence; but the Sun is considered the all-powerful deity beyond a doubt. Did the creator then create a being more powerful than himself, or were the two but the visible manifestations of one and the same being? The anomaly simply did not matter to the Blackfoot; he never even took the trouble to follow either course of reasoning to its logical conclusion. For him, it was sufficient to "acknowledge that there is one great power, always invisible, that is the master of life and to whom everything belongs, that he is kind and beneficient; and pleased to see mankind happy."(3) But how far this god was "pleased to interfere with the concerns of Mankind, they are not agreed; some think that his providence is continually exerted, that they can have nothing but what he allows to them."(3)

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(1) Lowie - op. cit. p. 253.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, pp. 64-5, 154.
Grinnell - op. cit. p. 263.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 362.

The world was peopled with spirits, just as it was with men and animals; some were naturally stronger and some weaker; the Sun was obviously the most powerful and therefore the one who had to be reckoned with above all others. Which of these, if any, created the world, and was therefore the primate of them all, was of no importance. The culture-hero could be confused with the sun-god without incongruity. The important point was to gain the favour of one of these spirits, to have a supernatural helper by whose aid many difficulties could be overcome. Religion centered about the vision-quest and not about cosmogeny. And it was not necessary to harmonize the two. Hence probably "nowhere ... is there a clean cut formulation of a definite god-like being with definite powers and functions."(1)

Though few of them tried to solve the riddle of the universe, the Blackfeet were much impressed by the manifestations of supernatural forces which they beheld round about them. "The Blackfeet made daily prayers to the Sun and to Old Man"(2) -- they also smoked daily to the spirits of departed relatives(3) -- "and nothing of importance is undertaken without asking for divine assistance."(2)

Dreams were the customary answer to prayer. By them they were enabled to fortell the future, and to secure help to meet it. "As dreams start them on the war path, so, if a dream threatening bad luck comes to a member of a war party, even if in the enemy's country and just about to make an attack on the camp, the party is likely to turn about and go home without making a hostile demonstration. The animal or object which appears to the boy, or man, who is trying to dream for power, is, as has been said, regarded thereafter as his secret helper, his medicine, and is usually called his dream (Nits-o-kan)."(2)

"Power" of various kinds was conferred upon individuals in dreams. A man might be destined to become a great warrior, a great hunter, or a medicine-man, or he might obtain some unusual powers such as the ability to compose songs. If one's guardian spirit were efficacious in curing disease, the owner would likely become a shaman, and possibly a wealthy one. It depended upon his reputation, of course, to what extent he would become a popular "doctor." Harmon's description of a Cree shaman's procedure is applicable to the Blackfoot: "In the capacity of physician, when sent for, he visits the sick and wounded, and prescribes medicines for their healing, and directs in their application, in doing which he goes through with many ceremonies, with great gravity. If the patient is very ill, he attends him at least every morning, and sings and shakes his che-che-quy, for an hour or two, over his head, making an unpleasant noise, which, it would seem, must do injury to the sick person. These Indian physicians do at times, however, perform distinguished cures ... The doctor is always well paid for his services, and his profession is the most lucrative of any among the Indians."(1) Shamans, in fact, became the plutocrats of the tribe; for them alone it was respectable to accumulate wealth and in their hands was the only profit-making enterprise known to the people.

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(1) Wissler - op. cit. pp. 110-11.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. p. 263.

(3) A.

The idea of sacrifice was well-known to the Blackfeet. The act of sacrifice brought to the attention of the Sun the plea of the supplicant. The smoke of the tobacco plant was, as everywhere in America, an incense-sacrifice, not to be vulgarly profaned by secular use. All sacrifices had to be worthy of the deity, and hence, either the best or the most precious obtainable. "These are sacrificial offerings to the Sun," writes Wilson, "which in former times consisted of the rarest and most highly valued articles possessed by the Indians; notably the skins of the two exceedingly rare specimens of the bison commonly known as the "white buffalo" and the "silk robe" -- the latter being called by the Blackfoot the "Beaver hair" -- the skin of the otter and the ermine, of the fawns of various deer, and the tail feathers of the eagle. Richly ornamented war clothing of all kinds and numbers of other things were proper for sacrificial purposes, the rule seeming to have been that the more scarce and valuable the article, the greater reason why the Indian should give it to the Sun."(1) And in the Sun Dance, "where the prayer is for life itself, the offering of a finger, or -- still dearer -- a lock of hair ... Of the buffalo, the tongue -- regarded as the greatest delicacy of the whole animal -- was especially sacred to the Sun. The sufferings undergone by the men in the Medicine Lodge each year were sacrifices to the Sun."(2) Articles of sacrifice were therefore (a) those which were considered rare or precious, and (b) those which entailed some degree of personal suffering and permanent inconvenience to the supplicant.

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(1) Harmon - op. cit. p. 324;
See also McClintock - op. cit. pp. 142-3, and 247-50.

It is difficult to see why there need be any connection between the religion of a people and its moral code; our own long habituation to confusing the two ought not to blind us to the irrationality of the procedure. At any rate, for the Blackfeet the two were utterly distinct. In this respect at least, they resembled the classical Greeks; the gods of the two peoples are alike in setting an example of amorality. Neither Zeus nor Napi felt constrained to respect what we should call moral laws. Thompson observed that though the Plains Indians professed to believe that the wicked were "badly treated after death," they nevertheless did not allow this to interfere with their "passions and desires."(3) Blackfoot religion had not yet evolved into a philosophy nor metamorphosed into a mere moral code.

Thompson's mention of a belief in a future state opens up the last phase of the discussion on religion. He states expressly that the Plains tribes believed in a life after death and such was undoubtedly the case amongst the Blackfeet. Here is his description of the Peigan paradise: "They have no ideas of a judgement in the other world, with rewards and punishments, but that the other world is like this we inhabit only far superior to it in the fineness of the seasons, and the plenty of all kinds of Provisions, which are readily got, by hunting on fleet horses to catch the Bisons and Deer, which are always fat. The state of society there is vague yet somehow the good will be separated from the bad and be no more troubled by them, that the good will arrive at a happy country of constantly seeing the Sun and the bad wander into darkness from whence they cannot return. And the darkness will be in proportion to the crimes they have committed."(1)

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(1) Wilson - op. cit. p. 4.

(2) Grinnell - op. cit. pp. 258-9.

(3) Thompson - op. cit. p. 236.
Muntsch - op. cit. p. 26, tries valiantly to show that "religion was connected with, and influenced morality", but is forced to admit that the behaviour of Old Man "practically" deprives "morality of a religious basis." In this connection, see Lowie - op. cit. p. 253.

The land whither dead souls hied lay among the sand dunes near the Sweet Grass Hills on the Canadian border; this valhalla was simply known as the Sand Hills.(2) The customary locution for saying that a man had died was to remark that he had gone to the Sand Hills.(3) Evidently everyone, old and young, good and bad, went there.

While he was at Carlton House, Franklin took the trouble of inquiring of an old Blackfoot his opinion concerning the future state. This man replied "that they had heard from their fathers, that the souls of the departed have to scramble with great labour up the sides of a steep mountain, upon obtaining the summit of which they are rewarded with the prospect of an extensive plain, abounding in all sorts of game, and interspersed here and there with new tents, pitched in agreeable situations. Whilst they are absorbed in the contemplation of this delightful scene, they are descried by the inhabitants of the happy land, who, clothed in new skin-dresses, approach and welcome with every demonstration of kindness those Indians who have led good lives; but the bad Indians, who have imbrued their hands in the blood of their countrymen, are told to return from whence they came, and without more ceremony precipitated down the steep sides of the mountain."(4)

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(1) Thompson - op. cit. p. 363.
See Harmon's account - op. cit. pp. 316-17, of the Cree paradise which is strikingly similar.

(2) Curtis - op. cit., VI, p. 155.

(3) Maclean - Mortuary customs of the Blackfeet Indians, p. 23.

(4) Franklin - op. cit., I, p. 119.

Whether dread of future punishment for evil committed during life influenced a man's actions is doubtful; but both Thompson's evidence and other considerations would seem to discredit it. There are, moreover, other reasons for questioning the honesty of Franklin's informant. It seems that there are no "mountains" or other steep hills in the Sand Hills, although there may be a cliff to climb before this idyllic spot is reached. If so, there seems to be no mention of it elsewhere, and knowing the Indian's desire to satisfy the white man's curiosity, I would suggest that Franklin's description be not taken too seriously. A little further on in the same connection, Franklin states that "Women who have been guilty of infanticide never reach the mountain at all, but are compelled to hover around the seats of their crimes, with branches of trees tied to their legs. The melancholy sounds, which are heard in the still summer evenings, and which the ignorance of the white people considers as the screams of the goat-sucker, are really, according to my informant, the moanings of these unhappy beings." Unfortunately, we are inclined to think this informant had had a bit of the trader's high wine to set his imagination and his compliant tongue working; the passage rings more with the psychology of the Cree than of the Blackfeet.(1) Infanticide, for instance, seems to have been totally alien to them, and therefore it would be unlikely to acquire a prominent place in their beliefs with regard to futurity.

In brief, the Blackfoot paradise was an ill-defined and vague country off in the direction of the Sweet Grass Hills to the east. Very little was known about it, but it was thought to be very like the mundane world, only that there everything was better. The sun shone brighter, the weather was finer, the buffalo fatter and the lodges more comfortable. Thither went all souls at death, the old, the young, the good and the evil. It may be that "somehow the good will be separated from the bad and be no more troubled by them," but for the good at least, there seemed to open up a prospect of eternal enjoyment of those things which in this world they had considered to be its most desirable fruits. But why should we pry into this question of futurity? To the Blackfoot, it was a vague state of blessed existence; he did not like to believe any more than we that he should perish utterly at death; so, as was but human nature, he created in his mind's eye a future existence of indeterminate duration, where he would have all those things he most cherished in this world, only better, and without the evil. Upon the rest he drew a veil.

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(1) See Harmon - op. cit. pp. 316-17.

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-- A NOTE ON BLACKFOOT INFORMANTS --

Seven Blackfoot Indians who supplied me with information concerning the customs of their people are referred to in the text by the letters A., B., C., D., E., F. and G. Only B. and D. were able to converse in English.

Of these A. is one of the three leaders of the Tobacco Society as it is at present organized. He is somewhat past middle age, intelligent and responsive. Mr. E. Curtis refers to him in The North American Indian, vol. XVIII, p. 193 by the name "Whitehead Chief".

B. is a son-in-law of A., a man about 35 years of age, intelligent, and keenly interested in his people's past. He is probably the most energetic Indian on the Reservation at the present time, highly respected and most trustworthy.

C. is a man about seventy-five years of age. An Indian of the old type, and a renowned raconteur, he is reputed never to have done a day's work -- in the white man's way -- in his life. Red-Leggings is his name.

D. is an Indian of very ordinary abilities, who is said to be preparing to assume the responsibilities at present borne by G., as one of the Tobacco Society leaders. His name is Spencer-Owl-Child.

E. is a middle-aged man who still adheres closely to the ancient life. I believe him to be honest, though his knowledge is not profound. His name is Pretty-Young-Man.

F. is a very old Blackfoot, reputedly well over eighty, though still active and mentally alert.

G. is considered by his people to know more about the rites of the Tobacco Society than any other living man. I do not consider his mental powers to be of the first rank, and he is not willing to impart what knowledge he has very freely. Mr. Curtis reproduces a portrait of this man, Fat-Horse by name, in The North American Indian, vol. XVIII, facing page 188 and mentions him on pages 176 and 193 of the same volume.

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A.M.N.H. -- American Museum of Natural History, anthropological papers.
C.G.J. -- Canadian Geographical Journal.
C.I. -- Canadian Institute.
C.P.A. -- Canada: Public Archives.
I.N. -- Indian notes.
M.H.S. -- Minnesota Historical Society.
R.S.C. -- Royal Society of Canada.
S.I. -- Smithsonian Institution.
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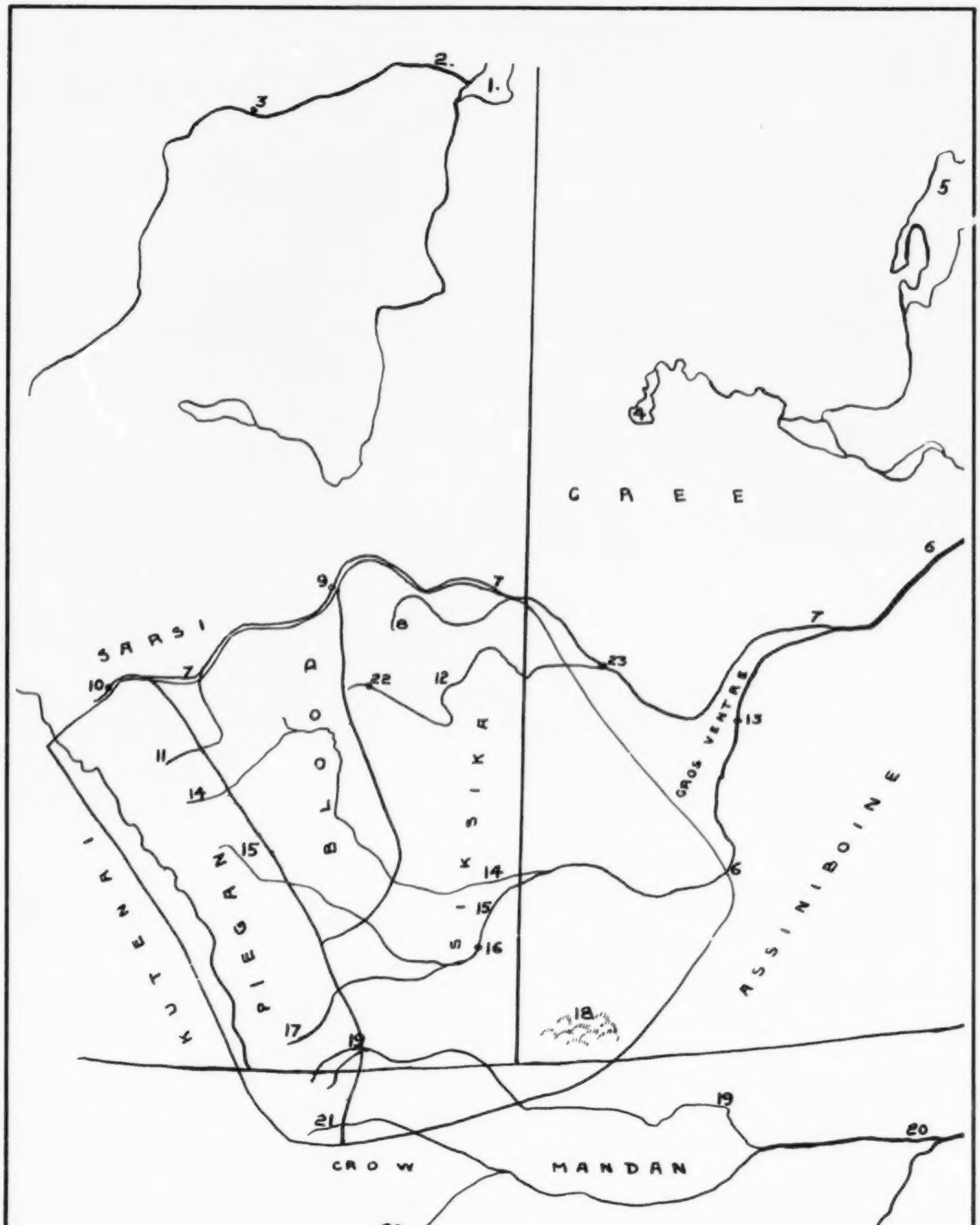
Sketch map showing probable habitat of the Blackfoot Indians.

1. Lake Athabasca
2. Peace River
3. Fort Vermillion
4. Peter Pond Lake
5. Lake Isle a la Crosse
6. Saskatchewan River
7. North Saskatchewan River
8. Vermillion River
9. Edmonton
10. Rocky Mountain House
11. Clearwater River
12. Battle River
13. Saskatoon
14. Red Deer River
15. Bow River
16. Medicine Hat
17. Belly River
18. Cypress Hills
19. Milk River
20. Missouri River
21. Marias River
22. Stettler
23. Battleford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Sketch map showing probable habitat of the Blackfoot Indians.

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